1985-86 INDEX

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COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

THE JOURNAL OF COMPUTER GAMING



INFOCOM'S MOONMIST

Interactive Ghost Story



MINDSCAPE'S DEFENDER OF THE CROWN

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MENU

Number 34 January/February 1987

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FEATURES

DEPARTMENTS

Activision, Inc.
2350 Bayshore Parkway
Mountain View, CA 94039
(415) 960-0410

GFL-CHAMPIONSHIP FOOTBALL: A joystick driven sports strategy game which relies as much on hand-eye coordination as it does on play calling, this new release from the Gamestar division of Activision tries to bridge the gap between straight statistics games and arcade games. The advantages of this simulation include a long menu of different play and defensive formation selections, as well as an option for drafting your own teams (by means of abstracted ability ratings, not actual NFL players). C-64/128 ($34.95). Circle Reader Service #1.

PORTAL: It's August 14, 2106 and a message comes from the Chicago node of Worldnet. The message describes a deserted planet and reads like something out of the Mercury Theater of the Air's "War of the Worlds" script in its plaintive and helpless isolation and fear. This interactive novel effectively places the player in the position of the protagonist in that you are actually interacting with a computer as you would be in the fiction. The screens are in bright colors and interesting graphics and actually remind one of some of the online information services that use graphics. The documentation is interesting and serves to enhance the plot, as well as playability. In this detailed six disk sided adventure, it's the player's objective to find out where everyone has gone and reunite with a human population before he completely disorients himself. C-64/128 ($39.95). Circle Reader Service #2.

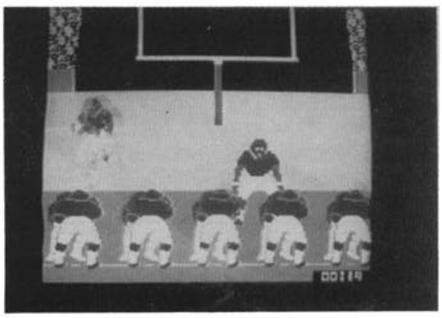
Artworx Software Company, Inc.
1844 Penfield Road
Penfield, NY 14526

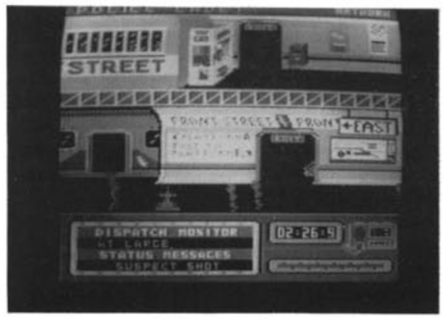
BAKER STREET DETECTIVE: This mystery/adventure game uses the familiar grid system of many Sherlock Holmes role-playing and computer games. The player is able to move from location to location by means of typing in a number corresponding to the photocopied grid map in the documentation. There is a helpful address list on the back of the map with the important locations cited. When the player thinks he/she has solved the mystery, he/she can take the Quiz, eight questions which test reasoning skills and fact-finding ability (the player may take the Quiz up to 3 times, but the earlier the case is solved, the higher the score). Atari ST. Circle Reader Service #3.

BEACH BLANKET VOLLEYBALL: If you enjoy arcade games and you think of a spike as being something you do with the ball instead of the way you wear your hair, you'll be interested in this game. The game is a simulation of a "friendly" three on three volleyball at the beach. It includes provision for spiking the ball, returning a spike,

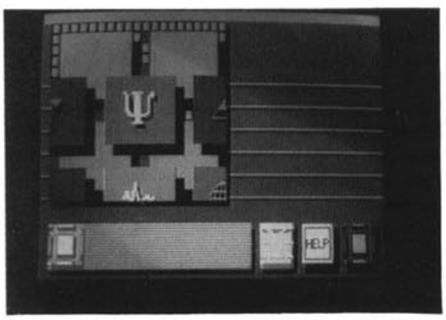
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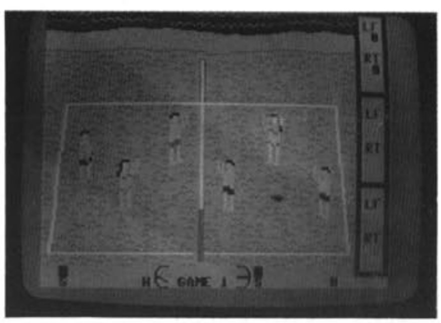


Police Cadet



Portal

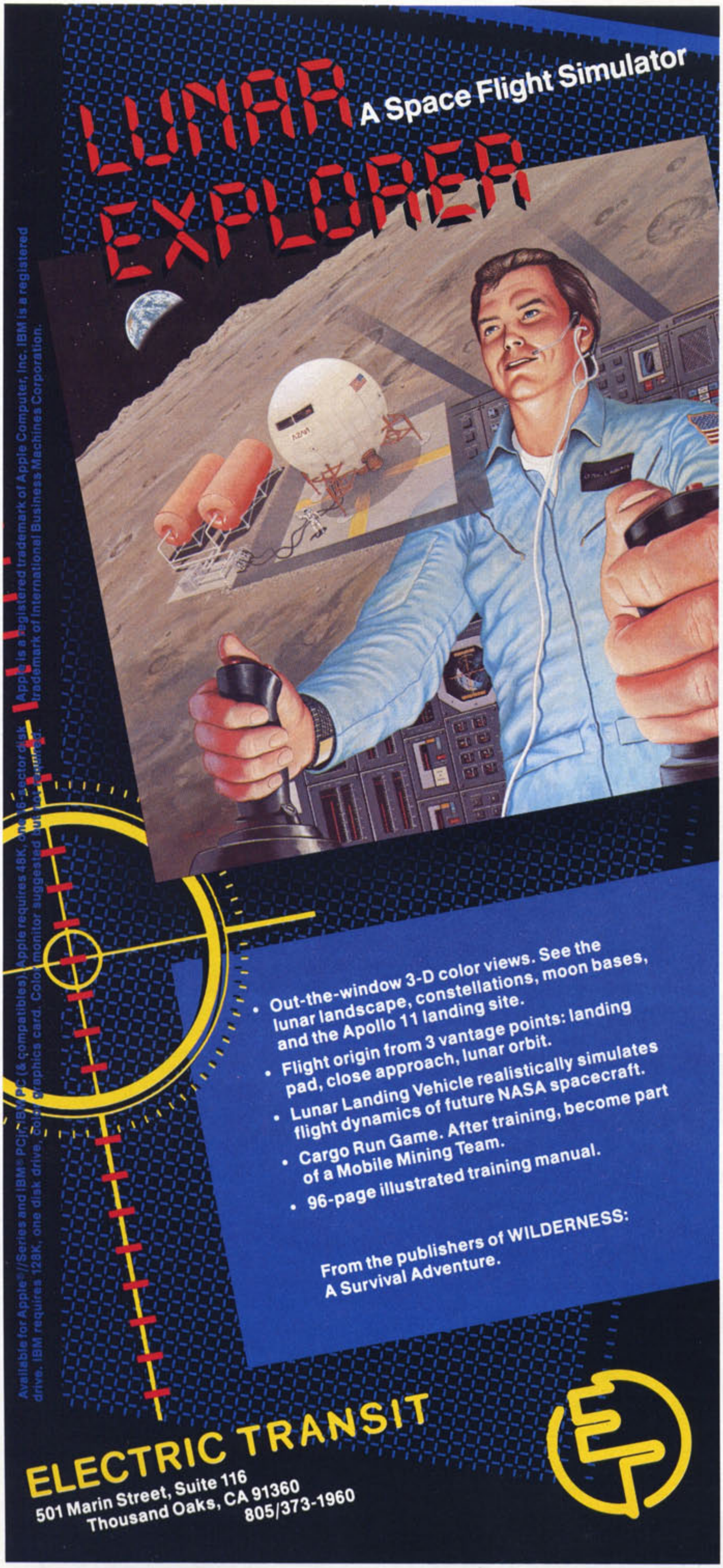

Thai Boxing


B.B. Volleyball


Gunship

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Circle Reader Service #23

PEEK (cont.)

catching an opponent out of position, and even allows you to do interesting angles with your serve. C-64. Circle Reader Service #4.

POLICE CADET: So, you've seen all of the "Police Academy" movies and you'd like to try your hand at stopping criminals? You'll be intrigued by this game. This game allows you to portray a police cadet during that crucial phase of being "on the streets." It has two difficulty levels and four semesters (scenarios) to each level. Catch the subway killers (or "make your day"), savor a firefight outside a "safe house," apprehend the shadowy criminals in the park, and capture a shoplifter in this arcade/adventure. C-64. Circle Reader Service #5.

THAI BOXING: This is yet another martial arts game in an arcade format. It contains both solitaire and two player modes and a high score table which saves to disk. There are six different backgrounds and three dimensional effect to enhance player interest. There are eight optional moves for each player to choose from, but the strategy required for victory seems minimal. Atari ST, C-64/128. Circle Reader Service #6.

Avalon Hill
4517 Hartford Rd.
Baltimore, MD 21214
(301) 254-5300

MAC PRO FOOTBALL: This is a statistics based game with forty different Super Bowl teams represented. It takes advantage of the Mac's capabilities by using four different windows: one to represent field position, another to function as the scoreboard, one as the "X"'s and "O"'s of the playing field as the play takes shape, and the last as an animated referee to call the penalties. The game looks as though it may have a better handle on game statistics than any to date. Macintosh. Circle Reader Service #7.

Datasoft
19808 Nordhoff Place
Chatsworth, CA 91311
(818) 886-5922

GUNSLINGER: Yup, them Dalton Brothers have escaped from jail and they're gunnin' fer ya'. That's the premise for this graphic adventure set in the Old West as it never was. The player takes on the persona of Kip Starr, ex Texas Ranger, and has two game days to find and save his true blue friend, James Badland. There's plenty of material to work with in this adventure which takes up four disk sides. Unfortunately, the parser has about as much vocabulary as Clint Eastwood in those early spaghetti westerns. The game allows for either joystick or keyboard controls, but even the joystick option doesn't speed things up much. Apple II series. Circle Reader Service #8.

THEATRE EUROPE: This is a grand strategical game based on a conven-

tional invasion of Western Europe by the Warsaw Pact countries. The game is intended to primarily reflect the "What if?" of conventional armed warfare in Europe, but has two aces up its sleeves. If either the NATO or Warsaw Pact player chooses, strategic chemical launches or nuclear launches are available. The game doesn't have to remain on the strategic level, however. The player has the option of using action screens which allow him/her to fight the battle in arcade style as the commander of a smaller unit. The game requires a joystick for all systems. Apple II, Atari, C-64/128. Circle Reader Service #9.

Earthware Computer Services
P.O. Box 30039
Eugene, OR 97403
(503) 344-3383

JOURNEY INTO DARKNESS: In this inexpensive interactive game, the player takes on the persona of a Ninja in order to defeat the pernicious and despicable Dark Lord of Dragongate. In spite of the low cost ($12.95 initially, but soon to be $19.95), the adventure makes use of graphics and enables characters to develop their skills throughout the game. 64K and joystick are required. Circle Reader Service #10.

Microprose Software
120 Lakefront Drive
Hunt Valley, MD 21030
(301) 771-1151

GUNSHIP: This AH-64 Apache Attack Helicopter Simulation contains voluminous documentation, uses numerous artistically ornamented screens(some with simulated 3D graphics), and potentially hundreds of different missions to fly. The game even comes with a cardboard overlay for the keyboard to simplify play. See if you can storm an embassy compound in Iran without getting your 'copter fouled with sand! Amiga, Apple II, Atari ST, C-64/128, IBM, Tandy ($39.95). Circle Reader Service #13.

Master Designer Software, Inc.
5743 Corsa Avenue, Suite 215
Westlake Village, CA 91361

KING OF CHICAGO: Shades of Edward G. Robinson, Humphrey Bogart, and James Cagney haunt the latest attraction from Master Designer's Cinemaware series of software (see featured review on DEFENDER OF THE CROWN in this issue). Even though the Macintosh version lacks the appeal of the Amiga's "cinematography" in DEFENDER, you won't need Ted Turner to colorize this visually stunning game. The adventure takes place in 1930's Chicago, ten years after the assassination of Big Jim "King of Chicago" Colosimo and immediately after Al Capone's conviction for tax evasion. As Pinky Callahan, the player gets a chance to follow in the legendary Scarface's footsteps (in ruling the mob, not incarceration). If you like old gangster flicks, you'll revel in this chance to cast yourself in the starring role. Macintosh. Circle Reader Service #17.

Polarware
521 Hamilton
Box 311
Geneva, Illinois 60134

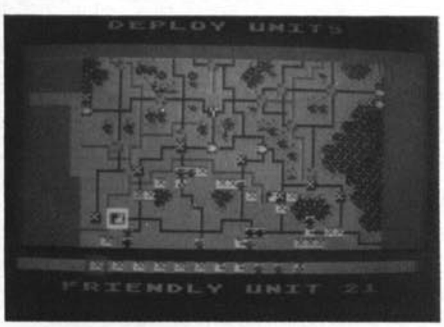
ELECTRIC CRAYON: This is a series of software designed to function as a computer coloring book. Select the area to be colored, select the color, and hit a button. Voila! A masterpiece in the making. The best part, Mom and Dad, is that the kids can't color on your walls with this coloring set! The program helps children learn their ABC'S, farm animals (FUN ON THE FARM), and geography (THIS LAND IS YOUR LAND). Each disk contains 26-30 pictures. Apple II series. Circle Reader Service #18.

Probase Group
1738 W. La Palma Ave.
Anaheim, CA 92801
(714) 535-2833

PC WORD POWER: This is a vocabulary game which 1-32 people can play. It is a vocabulary quiz with multiple choice type answers and has six different levels of difficulty. Level six looks reminiscent of the Graduate Record Examination's verbal section. Each level contains 400 words, so once you can define the 2,400 words in the glossary, it isn't a real game anymore. IBM. Circle Reader Service #19.

Strategic Simulations, Inc.
1046 N. Rengstorff Ave.
Mountain View, CA 94043

WARGAME CONSTRUCTION SET: This program acts as both a utility and a game. The former (EDITOR) allows the user to design his own scenarios from historical ancients to futuristic sci-fi battles. The latter (GAME) allows the user to become a player at the game/scenario he has designed. The lack of advantage given to flanking, vital to pre-Twentieth Century warfare, diminishes the value of these scenarios in those periods, but it's tremendously exciting to have the capacity to be able to design your own game without having to learn programming, even if you only play it once. Atari, C-64 ($29.95). Circle Reader Service #20.



Wargame Construction

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SSI

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Baltic 1985	$35	$23	•		•	
Battalion Commander	$40	$27	•	•	•	
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Battlegroup	$60	$40	•		•	
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Colonial Conquest	$40	$27	•	•	•	
Computer Ambush	$60	$40	•	•	•	
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Rings of Zilfin	$40	$27	•		•	
Roadwar 2000	$40	$27	•		•	
Shard of Spring	$40	$27	•		•	
Six Gun Shootout	$40	$27	•	•	•	
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War in Russia	$80	$53	•	•		
War-South Pacific *NEW*	$60	$40	•			
Wargame Constr. Set *NEW*	$30	$20		•		
Warship	$60	$40	•	•	•	
Wizard's Crown	$40	$27	•	•	•	

SIMULATIONS CANADA

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SSG

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MICROPROSE

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ACCOLADE

Title	LIST PRICE	OUR PRICE	App	Atr	C64	IBM
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ETC.

Title	LIST PRICE	OUR PRICE	App	Atr	C64	IBM
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MAJOR PLAYERS READY FIRST QUARTER RELEASES!

January heralds the Consumer Electronics Show, so game manufacturers are pulling out all the stops to have their software ready to display at the exposition. Industry sources indicate that translations will take up much of the companies' attention during the first quarter. Here are some of the items which are not translations which certain companies hope to release in the first quarter of 1987.

Accolade: Expects to release their football game, 4th and Inches, at the show. The company also plans to release a murder mystery entitled, appropriately enough, Killed Until Dead. Their "Advantage Series" will be strengthened by the addition of Power, loosely described as a space game. Almost ready for release, but expecting to be retitled before January, is a new adventure game using comic/cartoon situations.

Avalon Hill: The microcomputer games division is expecting to have Dark Horn ready for both Apple and C-64. This is the long-awaited fantasy game by Tom Cleaver, author of Galaxy. Guderian is still undergoing revision and would be a longshot for first quarter release.

Electronic Arts: EA's Interplay affiliate is releasing a translation of The Bard's Tale for the Amiga which is much more than a port. The new version has six different songs (used in spellcasting) for the bard with four different instrumentations. It features 90 different animated graphics of characters/monsters and 85 different spells. Bard's Tale II: The Destiny Knight is nearing completion and features ranged combat. Also, creatures can be converted and made a permanent part of the adventurer's team. They also plan to release Michael Stackpole's (Mercenaries, Spies and Private Eyes) new roleplaying game, Wasteland, which is similar to the Mad Max films.

Mindscape: The distributors of Master Designer Cinemaware and Balance of Power aren't simply resting on their laurels. They are pinning positive hopes on their new Thunder Mountain Division (see below) of discount software, but aggressively releasing other titles, as well. Parallax, a fast-paced space arcade game with a three dimensional effect leads the way, followed by a judo simulation (Uchi-Mata) and a karate adventure. They are also expected to preview Trailblazer, a bouncing ball arcade name with some new twists, at the Consumer Electronics Show. Also possible for the first quarter is the yet untitled, third issue in the Macventure series.

Sir-Tech: The official position at Sir-Tech is that there will be no official release date on Wizardry IV: The Return of Werdna or Wizardry V until they are ready to ship. The company does plan to release two other titles in January however: Space Combat Simulator and The Seven Spirits of Ra. The former will be similar to Skyfox, but set in space and featuring 3D shapes with color and Newtonian physics (suggested $39.95). The latter, based on Egyptian mythology, is a mixed adventure/RPG which takes place inside and outside of pyramids.

Strategic Simulations, Inc.: Gary Grigsby's War in the South Pacific should be available on the Apple by the time you read this and the C-64 version is expected in late January. This is the only new release definitely set for first quarter, 1987, but there are over 26 conversions in the works, including Kampfgruppe for IBM and Amiga and Rings of Zilfin, Shard of Spring, and Wizard's Crown for the ST.

Strategic Studies Group: One thing which is as dependable as death and taxes is that SSG won't put out a game they're not pleased with. The good news is that Road to Appomatox will be an exciting and revolutionary product. The bad news is that it's not certain for the first quarter. Russia, an eastern front game, has been moved ahead of RTA on the production schedule and should be available in early 1987.

BRAINWAVE CREATIONS FORMED!

Mike Berlyn, author of Suspended and other Infocom adventure games (as well as the recent Tass Times in Tonetown which he co-authored with Brian Fargo), and his wife, Muffy, are rumored to be millimeters away from penning a deal with a major publisher for a line of text adventures that

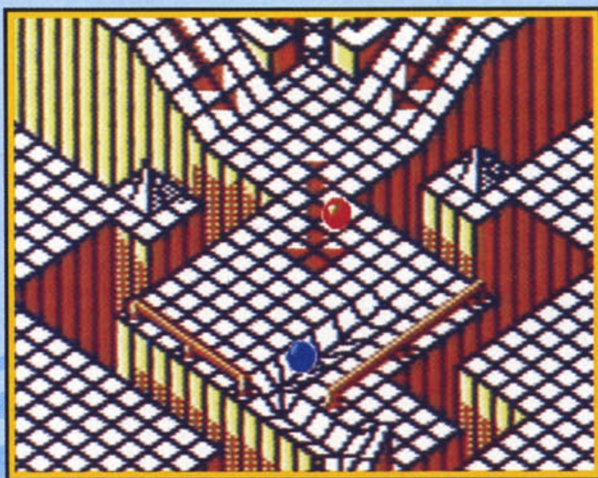
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MARBLE MADNESS™

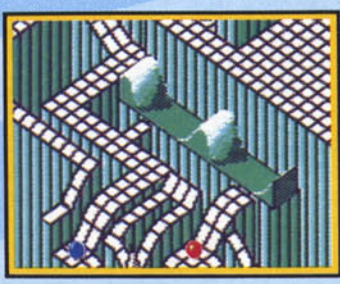
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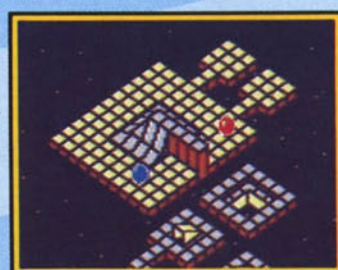
Ultimate Competition for 1 or 2 players.
The object is simple. Race your marble to the goal line, and don't let anything get in your way. It sounds easy, but it just might drive you nuts.



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Fantastic 3-D terrains are the raceways. Zany (but dangerous) enemies await your every turn. Avoid the deadly steelies and the pounding hammers. Watch out for the hungry marble munchers. Even surf a mechanical wave!



Secret Level
If you can find it, just wait till you try to get through it!



Incredible Madness
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MoonMist

As told by Scorpia

That's it, step right in and close that door, quickly! Baby, it's cold outside. Of course, you wouldn't expect anything else in January. But I shouldn't keep you standing here like that; you look a bit frozen in that, ahhh, bronze, umm, costume of yours. Just sit here by the fire and warm up your body; Fred's already concocting something to take care of your insides (not too strong now, Fred!). Well, after all that jaunting around the solar system, it's time to get your feet back on the ground, and I have just the place for you. A nice, solid, castle in Cornwall.

Moonmist is an introductory-level game, so most folks shouldn't have too much trouble with it. Still, the game has some neat features, and takes the concept introduced in Cutthroats, namely, the re-playable game, a step further. There are four separate games within Moonmist, each controlled by your choice of color at the beginning of the adventure: green, blue, yellow, and red.

Actually, you could pick other colors, but you'll still get one of the same four scenarios. You also get to decide if you're male or female; this has no real effect on the game, it just lends a little extra touch, and some people will react to you differently depending on whether you're male or female.

While there are four separate games, they are all based on the same functions: find the hidden treasure, and discover the secret of the ghost that is haunting Tresyllian Castle, and making a nervous wreck of your good friend Tamara. There is a different treasure and ghost in each scenario.

The one problem with all this is you have to play every scenario right from the very beginning; you choose the color when you first arrive at the castle. Thus you must to go through all the same motions four times, and considering the amount of disk access in this game, that can become a bit much. Only after dinner, when you begin the hunt for the treasure (and the ghost) do things change.

So the opening is pretty much standard: you arrive at the castle, meet Tamara and all the guests, change into your dinner outfit, and go downstairs for the dinner party. Afterwards, a tape machine starts playing, setting off the hunt. The first clue is an indication of the treasure you're looking for, the second one begins the quest.

One of the really terrific features here is the ability to 'go to' a place. As long as you know the name of the room or area you want to visit, you can go there in a single command. For instance, if you're in the foyer, and you want to go to the library, you just say: Go to the library. And off you go!

Mapping is a breeze, too. A very nice map of most (although not all) of the castle is provided. It even shows the secret passages (of course, you'll have to figure out how to get into them on your own). I wouldn't want to sleep in this place, myself. Those passages are everywhere, and peepholes, too. The castle must have been designed by Big Brother.

Ok, let's take a look at the variations themselves, starting off with the green one, which is the easiest of the four. Dinner is over, the tape has played, and you have the first two clues. What you're looking for is pretty obvious, especially if you read the brochure (an absolute must!), paying careful attention to the description of the Old Great Hall.

The second clue may be a little harder, and you'll have to poke around in unmapped places. Remember to examine everything, like the good detective you are, and the third clue should be in hand before long. Let's look at it. Hmmm. Sounds like secret stuff to me. Which reminds me: you'll want a light source sooner or later, probably sooner in some cases. Might be a good idea to wander around and find one.

So now you have the fourth clue. Uh-huh, this one's not too hard; just look in the write place, and I'll bet you find the treasure. Nice going, Sherlock! All that's left is finding out about the ghost. Bet you know by now who it is, even if you have no evidence. You don't? Oh tch, breathes there a soul so dead, who doesn't know the most likely spot for a secret passage?

You're making progress now! All that's left is a little snooping in a certain room (keep that aerosol device handy!), and the case should be wrapped up in short order.

The blue variation is a bit tricky; there are only three clues, instead of four, to the treasure. That should make it easier, but you have to do a bit more running around with that second clue. As before, the first one is a hint to what the treasure is.

That second clue is a looong one. Three parts, in

Continued on pg. 29

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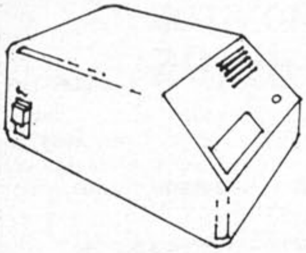
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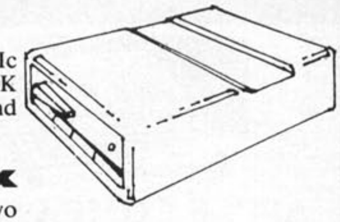
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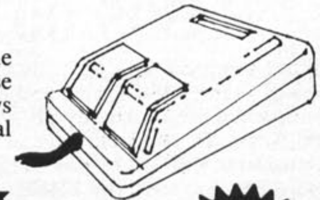


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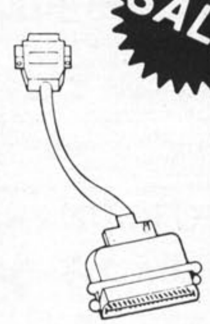


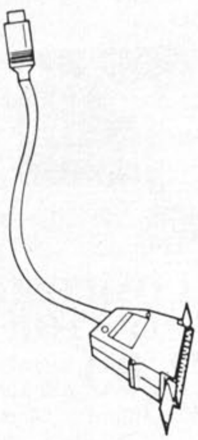
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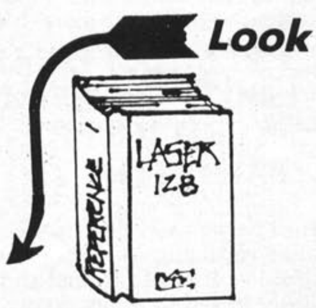
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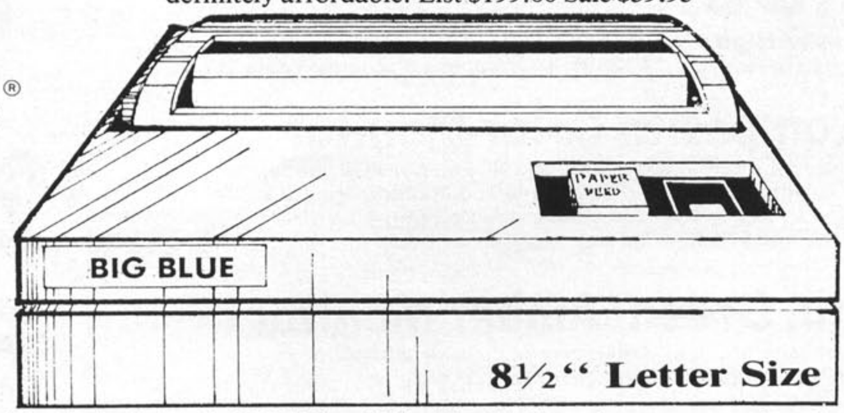
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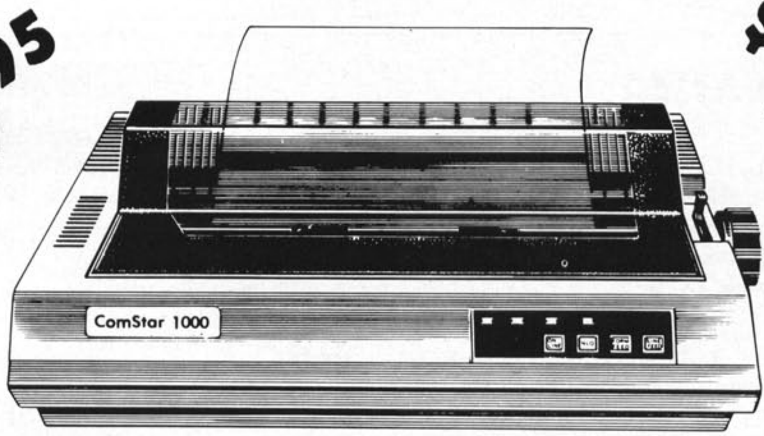
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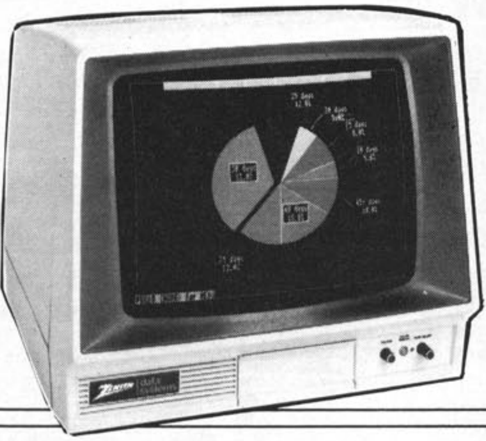
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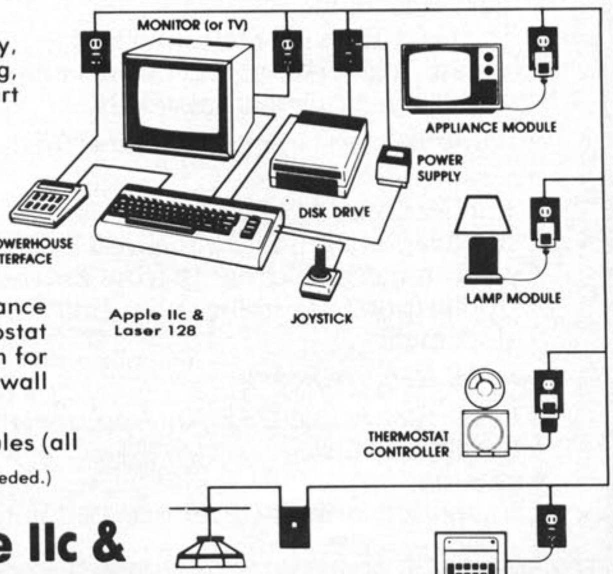
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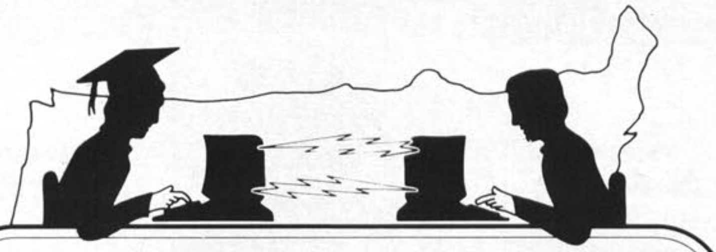
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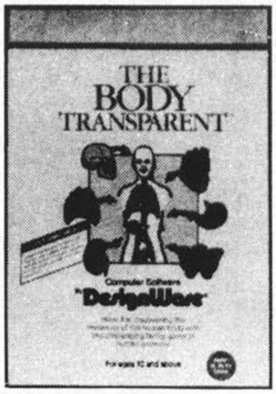
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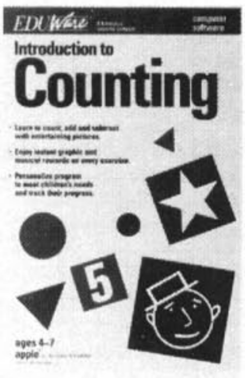


States & Traits — A valuable learning tool for geography and history students. Learn basic geography and then go on to find out interesting facts about every region in the country. Find out where historical events happened on the map. As you play quick answers are rewarded with bonus points. In the "States" part of the program you must move states into the right place on the map and the state lights up in bright color. In "Traits" you identify state capitals and landmarks. You can also design your own games (Disk) List $44.95 **SALE $23.95**

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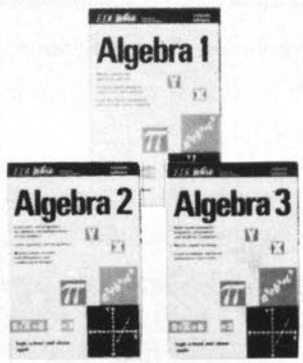
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Spelling and Reading Primer — You are taught spelling and reading skills in an entertaining tutorial format. This learning system introduces your child to spelling and reading by linking drawings of familiar objects with words and basic word groupings. Twenty-two word lists cover a wide range of vocabulary from simple one-syllable words, to multi-syllable words with dipthongs, and special categories such as directions and numbers. (Disk) List $39.95 **SALE $22.95**

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STICKYBEAR TYPING — Learn to type with Stickybear. The manual included with the software, explains easy-to-follow techniques that will develop keyboard skill and accuracy. You are advised to sit in a comfortable position, feet properly placed, fingers poised. Let the bear be your guide as you move from beginner level to the more advanced exercises. When you are confident in your ability, you can play one of the challenging games. We recommend this for kids of all ages. (Disk) List $39.95 **SALE $22.95**







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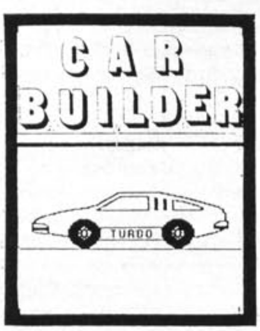


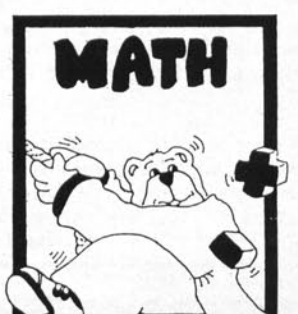
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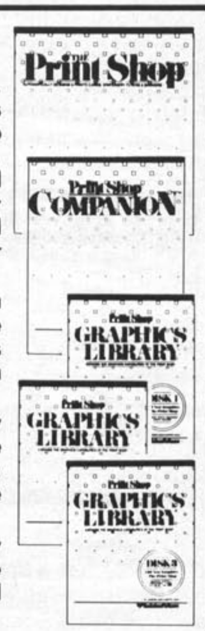
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Airheart — The exciting arcade-style rescue game that requires total concentration and skill. Pilot your jet-sled over the ocean to save a sleeping prince from his captors at sea and return him to his kingdom. The robot guardians of the prince will try to prevent your access to him and you will need to be clever in order to be named the legendary hero, Airheart. (Disk) List $34.95 **SALE $22.95**



On Balance — The personal financial program that really is easier to use than the others. Begin putting your accounts in order instantly with no complicated setup time. This one piece of software helps you organize everything from your checkbook to your tax records. Keeps track of your income and expenses, so that you can plan a budget that suits your lifestyle. Also prints reports that reflect your net worth and the total spent on each bill. (Disk) List $99.95 **SALE 64.95**



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SEVEN CITIES OF GOLD — This historically accurate program is set in the 16th Century world of the Spanish Conquistadors. There are over 2800 screens to explore and 200 native settlements. The computer maps all of the discoveries you make. All communications are by gesture as you face the same problems Columbus encountered — disease, unfriendly natives and food supply. (Disk) List $39.95 **SALE $9.95**



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ARTIC FOX — The Artic Fox moves along on caterpillar treads, imitating the movement of a real tank. The three dimensional landscape has realistic properties like mountains and lakes for you to maneuver around. The controls are fully functional and include weapons. You have lasers, canons and point-of-view guided missiles for aerial reconnaissance. Continuous combat will test your reaction skills. There are four enemy bases to destroy and 3 levels of difficulty. (Disk) List $39.95 **SALE $27.95**



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LORDS OF CONQUEST — The challenging strategy game that takes the most exciting qualities of the board game Risk and adds advanced ingredients of the computer age. Conquering the world is the object and the battlefield is a map of the world. Determine your home country and where to place your armies. Each game is unique because there is a different world to conquer every time you play. Features five forces: foot soldiers, cavalry, fleets, adjoining territories and cities. Sitting down at a board game was never this much fun...(Disk) List $39.95 **SALE $27.95**



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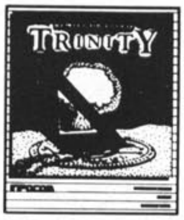
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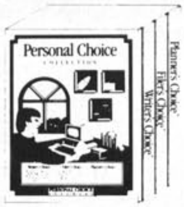


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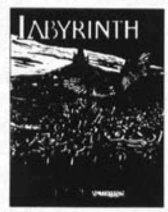


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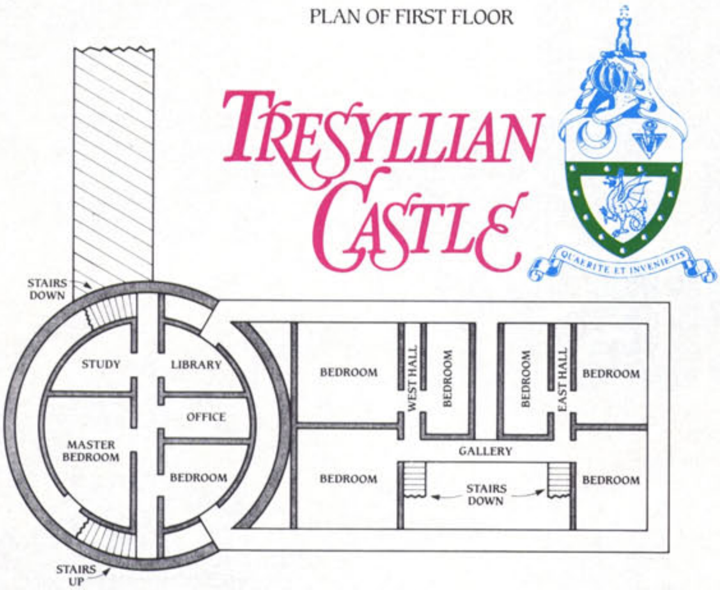


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fact! Filling in the blanks is pretty easy, but figuring out where they point to could be another matter. Let's look at the first part. That one seems to have a musical air to it. But, what's this? No clue when you find the right place? That's ok, just keep going, and all will be clear shortly.

Now, the second part. Watch out here...this one is a trifle devious! No, don't go running off to the dungeon! Re-read that brochure! That's better. You probably have an idea now where you're headed, but let's look at the third part of the clue, just to be sure.

This one is simple, and now that you have all three parts worked out, you know where to go searching next. Hmmmm. This third clue is also a fill-in. I never figured out why, myself, because the parts to fill in don't spell out anything special. In any case, a few minutes of thought, and the clue should ring your chimes as to the location of the hidden goodie.

On to the ghost! Hold on there...you won't find anything where you did in the last version. Remember, each one is different. Of course, you have some ideas as to the identity of the spook; time for more nosing around someone's room. Gee, this is pretty easy, huh? Well, the next one is a trifle harder.

In the red variation, we are back to four clues again. And the ghost may surprise you. Do make sure you read the maid's note. In fact, it's a good idea to read it in all the scenarios, because it's a little different each time. Now to the treasure hunt.

The second and third clues here are pretty simple. The fourth one, tho, may give you pause for thought. What could it mean? Time for that invaluable brochure again (it must be getting dog-eared by now!). Aha! Sneaky, sneaky! Imagine having to look in a place that doesn't show up in the room description.

So we come to the ghost. More tricks. You've searched the guilty party's room, right? And you didn't find what you were looking for, did you? Hehehe. What a surprise! Gee....you don't suppose this means that the ghost is (gasp!) real, do you? Well, there's only one way to find out. You'll have to wait for it to show up (yep, the Infocom hallmark - waiting - has finally reared its ugly head! Good thing it's only in this variation).

Of course, you're not going to wait in any place so mundane as a room. That wouldn't be any fun at all (not to mention, nothing would happen). So think about it: if you were a ghost, where would you likely be, especially if you didn't want to be seen?

Patience wins the day! At least, it should if you did everything right. And another case has been brought to a successful conclusion. Even tho it may not have been thrilling for one person.

And now, we come to the yellow variation, which may be a bit of a downer. You'll know why pretty soon into the game. This one is also the 'Edgar Allan Poe' hunt; all the clues are taken from his poems and stories. Those of you familiar with Poe's works will breeze through the clues. Even if you don't know them, all but the fourth clue can be figured out pretty easily with a little thought.

So we take a peek at the second clue. Yep, that one's easy. Up you go and grab the third clue. Hmmmm. Not so easy, at least in figuring out where to go. Look sharp, my girl, and you'll find the fourth clue. Now, if you know the story mentioned in the clue, you know where to go next. If you don't know the story, think about the legend of the White Lady, which may suggest something.

All right, we're almost done here. You have the treasure, only the ghost (sigh) is left. Time to do the usual snooping. Well, you found something, but perhaps, again, not quite what you were looking for, eh? No matter. Check the name on the paper. Bet you know where to look now. And so the last variation is finished, although the ending may not be so happy. Such is life.

I see by the invisible clock on the wall that time is almost up for this issue. Remember, if you need a hand with an adventure game, you can reach me in the following ways:

On Delphi: Stop by the GameSIG (under the Groups and Clubs menu). On GEnie: Visit the Games RoundTable (type: SCORPIA to get there). On the Source: Send SMail to ST1030.

By U.S. Mail (all correspondents in the U.S. must include a self-addressed, stamped envelope to receive a reply): Scorpia, P.O. Box 338, Gracie Station, New York, NY 10028.

Until next time, happy adventuring!

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Atari Playfield

by Gregg Williams

"Major Motion" and Williams' Law of Gaming Relativity

The law is simple and goes like this: "If you saw the arcade version first, you'll probably like it better. If you saw the microcomputer version first, you'll probably like it.

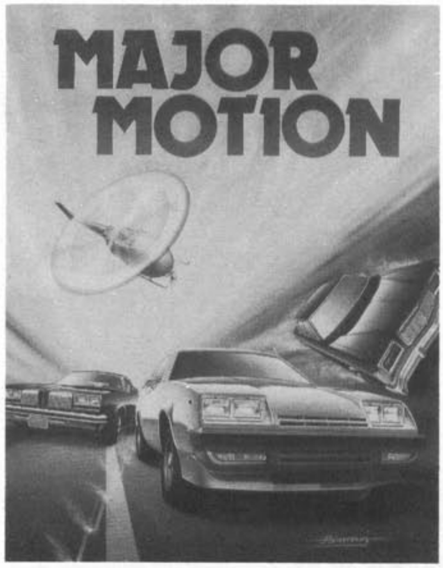
This law came to mind after I had played Major Motion, an Atari ST game from MichTron that--shall we say--borrows heavily from the arcade game, Spy Hunter (The game is $39.95 from MichTron, 576 S. Telegraph, Pontiac MI 48053, (313)-334-5700). Former CGW columnist, Bruce Webster, had recommended it in the highest terms. After playing it for a while, I thought it was commendable, but except for the fact this version doesn't gobble quarters, I still preferred the original.

I asked Bruce via electronic mail how Major Motion compared to Spy Hunter, phrasing my question neutrally to include the possibility that he hadn't seen the original. In fact, he hadn't. His reply went something like, "Yeah, I went to an arcade a few days ago, played Spy Hunter for a while. It's nice, but I still like Major Motion better." Don't get me wrong; this is a perfectly valid opinion. The point I'm making is that game loyalty is a lot like first love--the first one will always be special.

Major Motion is a racing game that lets you indulge, in finest videogame style, in some very antisocial behavior: killing bad guys, shooting and sideswiping cars, and indulging in dirty tricks wherever possible. The game contains echoes of super-spy movies, the Mad Max films, and cutthroat gladiator races.

The game's action (for those of you who haven't seen it or Spy Hunter) is simple enough. You see all the action from a bird's-eye view. You get a car (and five spares) that you maneuver right and left with the mouse; you also roll the mouse forward and back to control your car's speed. The left mouse button, which is always enabled, fires bullets forward (Note: These are only effective against two out of the five kinds of blue/black bad-guy cars that, in various ways, try to drive you off of the road.).

If you last long enough, a red equipment van pulls in front of you and gives you a chance, while still on the road, to pull up into it. When it stops on the side of the road to let you out, it gives you a super-spy gadget of some sort that is yours until you either use it three times or until your car crashes. The extra capabilities, activated by a keypad button or the right mouse button, are: throwing oil behind you, getting a burst of speed, releasing a smokescreen behind you, launching a surface-to-air missile (against an obnoxious and otherwise invulnerable enemy helicopter), or activating a temporary sonic "shield" that causes any car that touches you to crash. The terrain you drive on includes one large or two small, divided highways, ice, and gravel.



If you last longer still (somewhere between 20,000 and 30,000 points), you drive your car into a covered bridge and it comes out the other end as a speedboat (just as in Spy Hunter). The game becomes an aquatic version of the cat-and-mouse car action that preceded it, but (and this is Major Motion's addition, to the best of my knowledge) the river becomes as dangerous an opponent as the blue/black speedboats that pursue you. The river contains periodic sandbars that destroy your boat if you run aground, as well as scattered red and green land mines (some of which come from enemy boats). Occasionally, you run into regions checkerboarded with boat-sized grey areas (bogs?) that also destroy your boat if you touch them. I found myself losing boats on the river much quicker than I ever lost cars, even in the most unfair situations, on the road.

Major Motion is different from Spy Hunter in several ways. The most important is that you can never lose a car from simply colliding with another vehicle at high speed (this really changes the way you play). You have one extra weapon (sound) and a jet black racer opponent that can always outrace you and seems to be sudden death, no matter what you do to it. The water scenes, as described above, are also somewhat different. On a more superficial level, this game plays the themes from "Mission: Impossible," "Batman," and a third theme I don't recognize, instead of Spy Hunter's "Peter Gunn" theme (which is half the Spy Hunter experience for me). Overall, the game is laudable.

However, this leads me to an ethical dilemma. I like the game, but it is, strictly speaking, about 80% a thinly-disguised copy of Spy Hunter and 20% unique material. One wonders what the legal minds at Bally, the owners of Spy Hunter, might think. Is 20% of original material enough to make it legally different? I have elsewhere argued for the market's right to improve software by the process of "incremental evolution" and this would seem to be such a case. It's a complex issue. What's right? I don't know--it's a very personal decision. (Editor's Note: See "Industry News" in CGW #32 for a brief note on a recent legal decision in this area.)

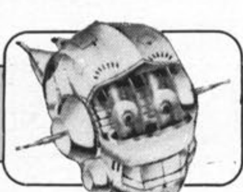
In Brief

Although I'm not much on sports games, I have to mention briefly that Accolade (20833 Stevens Creek Blvd., Cupertino CA 95014, (408)-446-5757) has recently translated its Hardball game and Fight Night boxing game to the Atari 800. I played briefly with both of them and they seemed nice enough, although I'm not current on what other Atari 800 baseball and boxing games offer. Still, Accolade is one of the few game companies still releasing new Atari 800 games, so sports-oriented Atari 800 owners should vote with their dollars.

Also, Electronic Arts has, until now, ignored the Atari ST in favor of the Commodore Amiga. That has ended, in an indirect sort of way. EA now puts its sticker on (and distributes) the products of Origin Systems (340 Harvey Rd., Manchester NH 03103, (603)-640-3360). For those of you with years of free time, they have just converted their Ultima III adventure game to the Atari ST and have more products on the way. I'll keep you posted.

That's all for this month. Until next time, remember: "A penny saved used to be two pennies earned, but the tax laws have changed all that."

Late News: In my November column, I recommended Fortress and Cytron Masters, both of which were being discontinued by Strategic Simulations, Inc. Since then, SSI has announced a new, low-cost ($14.95 list price) line of "SSI Classics," which includes the above two titles (which I have seen and can recommend) and Gemstone Warrior, Eagles, Combat Leader, and Computer Baseball (which I have not seen) in Atari 800 format. --gw



WOOK OUT, YOU WASCALLY WOBOT!

A Look at *Robot Rascals*

by Jasper Sylvester

ROBOT RASCALS

Salvage operations on *Laustenfownd* weren't going well. The "micro-magnifier" showed up on the mule's scan as being located in the rocky badlands. "Shouldn't be a problem," thought the chief of scavenging operations, "we've crossed that rough terrain before." Unfortunately, the crashing, crunching and circuit jarring trek across Bunten's Boulders was to cause the controller on the XJGT mule to short circuit and follow orders erratically, at best. It was an infuriating experience. The chief would signal for the robot to move south on the map grid and it would wander at a 45 degree angle to the southwest or even, for that matter, veer northwest. He hit the control button again, anxiously wishing the robot would move south, but the contrary mule moved 180 degrees opposite of its instructions.

Robot Rascals (*RR*) The latest from Dan Bunten (along with Alan Watson) is a multi-player, computer moderated scavenger hunt with two card decks of exterior variables that will, sometimes, make you feel like you are in the middle of a Looney Tunes cartoon. At the beginning of each game, each player is allowed to choose the XJGT robot model of his choice. There is a familiar *Mule* model (a refugee from a former best-seller?), a classic 1950's sci-fi movie robot called a Belbot, an all terrain vehicle robot named Trak, a miniature character with the appropriate moniker of Tiny, a toy-like character known as Robbo, an octopus-like mechanoid named Sphero, two female robots with the names of Liz and Millie, a caricature which looks like a cross between a frog and an ostrich (Birt), and a rhythmic mover named Ize. The documentation states that "All robots have the same abilities: ...", but it certainly seemed that the Sphero model had more of a tendency to break down in hazardous ground. This seems especially true since it often had multiple breakdowns while the robots operated by other players only experienced occasional breakdowns. Also, one wonders why the profile on the Sphero emphasizes its value in open terrain if there isn't some difference in probability regarding damage.

Next, each player is dealt a hand of four brightly colored cards from the item deck. These zany objectives contain such neutral items as a pixel pencil, digital donut, transistor taco, silicon salad, denim disk, and others. If these represented the extent of the items, the game would be too straightforward and boring to be of any interest whatsoever. Fortunately, there is more to the item deck than that. There are items which cause negative repercussions. These include the infamous action anchor (causes robot to move slower), battery bug (disables capacity to store energy for future turns), binary blinders (disables scanning function), energy eater (reduces amount of energy available), helpless handbag (removes all shields), and teleport trap (disrupts any attempt to use teleport pads). Of course, these are balanced by opposite positive items. These include the bionic battery (modifies the robot with extra battery in order to store extra energy), dynamo diamond (which provides extra energy), gamma glasses (which gives the robot the capacity to scan without using energy), portal passkey (enhances teleport capacity by allowing teleportation with no energy expense), super shield (erects higher shield level for defensive purposes), and velocity vitamin (enables more efficient movement capacity). Obviously, it becomes harder to win (by retrieving all four items in the player's hand and returning home safely) if one has to carry an item with negative characteristics. A player with the handbag, for example, is easy prey for a fellow player in a larcenous mood. This means, of course, that it is desirable to get these bad items out of one's hand. That's where the other deck of cards (Luck Deck) comes in (which I will explain later).

After the players choose their robots and examine their four item card hands, the computer will declare a 'Global Event'. These happenings affect all players for the duration of one turn. They can be beneficial or detrimental. For example, a "High Energy" turn enables all players to accomplish more, but a "Low Energy" does the opposite; "No



Stealing" keeps everybody honest, while "No new Shields" makes almost every robot into a victim; and "Items Reverse" makes all the good items into negative ones and vice-versa. This can really devastate a player who likes the strategy of going for the advantageous items whether the item cards are in his hand or not. In that case, he'll have to drop what he's worked for like a hot potato. In the advanced game, there's another global event which can be crucial. Only in the advanced game can items be hidden (or purposefully dropped by your fellow players) into the lakes. Since robots rust, they can't swim and must wait for the "Lakes Dried Up" event in order to retrieve it. Global events are significant because they will impact upon the strategy which is most effective to use each turn. For example, if it's a slow movement turn and you are closer to an opponent than your items, you'll find it much more effective to attempt to steal his goodies than to waste your energy searching for your own. If you're slightly ahead in the game, you might want to save your energy for the "Slow Movement" turn and convert most of it into better shielding. "No Scanning" might indicate that stealing items from other players or building shields is the most beneficial task to accomplish in that turn. One must keep his strategy fluid if he is to get the most done each turn.

Noting the Global Event, each player will then, in turn, draw a 'Luck Card' and follow the instructions written thereon. This will seem a little like "Old Maid" to some players, but it serves the purpose of keeping each player's victory conditions in flux. "Take a Card" enables the player to take an item card from the top of the item deck or the discard pile, but he may discard it if he chooses. "Steal a Card" allows the player to draw a card from any player's hand, but he may return it if he does not like it. "Swap a Card" forces a draw between any two players. "Force a Show" requires a selected player to reveal his hand to all the other players. "Pass the Trash to the Left" (or "Right") requires every player to pass one item card to the player on the left or right. "No Luck" requires no action. It's easy to see how the Luck Cards can affect one's strategy. A player may have spent two turns scanning and moving toward an item, only to have its card drawn from his hand prior to finding it. More significantly, the player may lose the item card for an item *already* in his possession. Does the player keep the item and hope to get the card back or does he immediately drop the item in the nearest lake?

Immediately following the draw of the Luck Card, the player is ready to move his robot (thought I'd never get there, didn't you?). The robot may be controlled by either joystick or keyboard. You must stop on occasion because you cannot "Scan" on the move and scanning is how you find the objects. Pressing the joystick ("B") button brings up the control options menu. This enables the player to toggle to "Scan" (which locates items), "Move" (which enables the player to continue to move), "Drop" (drop any item which is no longer of value to the player), or "Quit" (in order to save remaining energy). When scanning, the player is able to determine by the speed in which the robot scans whether the item is near (fast scan) or far (slow scan). If the item is close at hand, the player will move a slight bit and scan again, move-scan, and move-scan until the robot is close enough for its tractor beam to pull the item in. If the item is far away, the player will probably want to maneuver the robot to one of the five teleport pads to teleport to a new location.

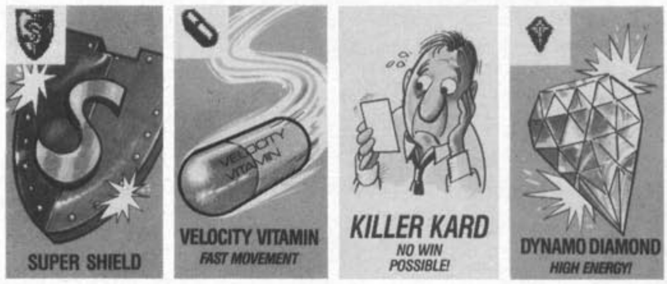
During his movement phase, the player may elect to steal another robot's items instead of seeking his own items. Stealing is accomplished by moving one's own robot so that it collides with another player's robot. If the other robot has shields, each bump offers a 50% chance of bringing a shield down. If the opponent's robot has no shields or his shields have been eliminated, the player will be presented with a depiction of the items in that robot's possession and is allowed to take whatever

he pleases. This can be very important if you are trying to get an item that matches the item card which has just been passed or swapped to you and the other player has not dropped the item. It is also important when someone is close to winning and you have a chance to steal the items he needs to win.

In the Beginner level of the game, the player needn't pay much attention to the terrain, at all. Movement is slowed somewhat when one crosses swamps, woods, and rocky badlands, but the shortest distance between two points is still a straight line in most circumstances. In the Standard level, the player must pay more attention to the terrain because the robot stands a better chance of getting damaged in rough terrain than in open terrain. In the Advanced level, players need to be especially wary of rough terrain because the probabilities of becoming damaged is double that of the Standard level. Sometimes, it's better to temporarily give up the search for an item in the swamp or the rocks than to ask yourself the inimitable question from Dirty Harry, "Do you feel lucky?" After all, you might not have that card on the next turn.

Damage does affect each robot's ability to accomplish the task assigned. It can halve movement points, remove all shields, or as described in the opening paragraph of this article, cause your robot to refuse to take instructions. Fortunately, there are two different ways to remove damage. One is certain and the other has a certain mystique about it. The former is to return to Home base so that your mechanoid can be repaired (while the tune to "There's no place like home plays briefly). The latter is to receive the fortuitous message, "Your robot picked up a faith healing broadcast and was repaired!" Of course, like saving rolls in a fantasy game, you rarely get the healing when you *really* need it.

There are three 'special' cards in the game. These are the 'Wild Cards' (there are two of these cards) and the 'Cosmic Cheat' card. The 'Wild Cards' allow the player to go after *any* item in the game as though the player held that particular item card in his hand. The 'Cosmic Cheat' card allows the player to win the game with only *three* items instead of the usual four. It's obvious that the existence of these cards creates a certain "fog of war" with regard to the victory conditions. In one game, my opponents thought I had the 'Cosmic Cheat' card because I headed in the direction of home with only three objects (I was really planning on stealing one of their items for my Wild Card.). As if all these elements didn't create enough randomness, the Advanced level includes a 'Killer Kard' which absolutely precludes a player from winning as long as it's in the player's hand. Of course, if you want more randomness, the Advanced level offers some alternate victory conditions. The player may decide to ignore *all* the cards in his hand and go for four bad items instead (You can even ignore the 'Killer Kard' under these circumstances). If that's still not enough variation for you, there are five other variations included in the rulebook.



STRATEGIC TIPS

Besides the tips listed in the documentation (pp. 17-19), I notice the following procedures to be beneficial.

Kard Karrying Assassin: I like to hold the 'Killer Kard' in my hand, letting everyone know that I have the card, until I have at least three of the items required to win. This has a tendency to discourage unwanted swaps and taking of cards from my hand. After I have my initial three items, it's easy to dump off the 'Killer Kard' and pick up a new objective. This strategy works even better if you're going for the four bad item strategy because you *never* have to discard the card and others will be reticent to "hit on" you. It even helps to get as many bad card items in your hand as you can if you're trying for this special kind of victory.

How Green Is My Valley?: It seems good to find one or two green (good items) first, regardless of what cards you have in your hand, because the items have their positive effect on your scanning, shields, movement, energy etc. whether you have the cards in your hand or not. These effects should help you find the items you actually do need with less expenditure of energy in the long run. This strategy works extremely well in the Standard level

Continued on pg. 66

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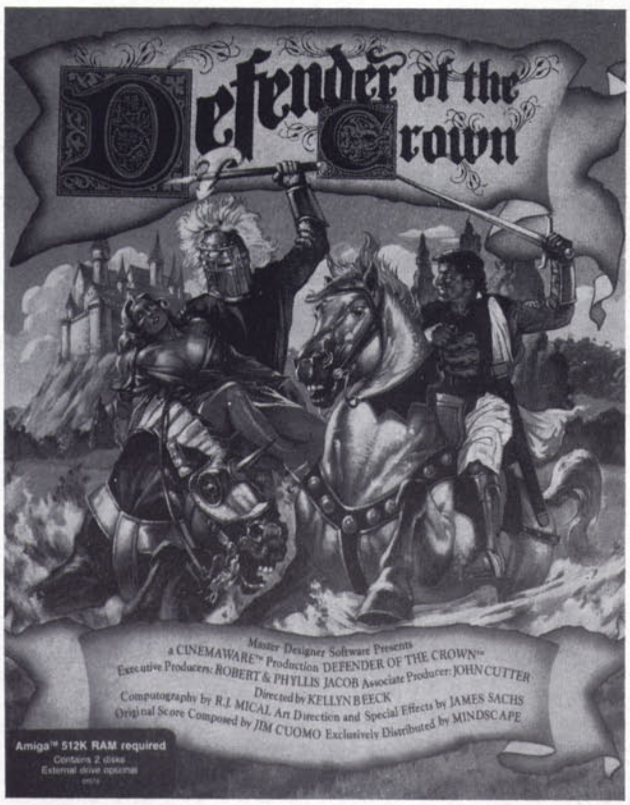
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Defender of the Crown

by Wyatt Lee



'Tis a darke, forboding time in Englande ande those who are loyale to the cause are needed. Heroic names are conjured by the fey ande magickal. 'Tis the era of *Ivanhoe*, *The Black Arrow*, ande *Robin Hood* ande now, 'ere long 'tis your chance! Bringe your Saxon brothers together ande reconquer the homelandes pilfered by those Norman swinne. Aye, woulde that ye coulde roast Front-de-Boeuf onne a spitt. Woulde that ye ande Robin of Locksley shoulde shout "Have at you!" on the fielde of valor.

Master Designer Software has released *Defender of the Crown* as the first of its *Cinemaware* series. Inspired by thrilling celluloid adventures from Douglas Fairbanks' **Robin** to Robert Taylor's **Ivanhoe**, the creative group at Master Designer has captured the flavor of the big screen from opening title shot to the closing banner (a flashing The End superimposed on a peaceful English village scene). The graphics are resplendent in color quality and offer as much improvement over mundane graphics as technicolor did over black and white. Robin's sword flickers in the light of his campfire, the castle walls are stained from refuse being disposed out of the windows and the animation occasionally gives us a glimpse of this pre-sewage system disposal, and in the event of a successful rescue, the lovely Saxon maiden looks at the player with all the feminine wiles of a film heroine as she blushes and

blinks prior to the romantic denouement.

The game begins after the opening credits and the initial situation explained. The player decides who the star of the movie is to be. Will you cast yourself as Wilfred of Ivanhoe, Cedric of Rotherwood, Wolfric the Wild or Geoffrey Longsword. Each character is rated on Leadership, Jousting Ability, and Swordplay Ability. Choose well, since these skills will have bearing upon your success in the game. If you want to play the game primarily as a wargame, the Leadership factor will probably be the most important. If you want to rescue damsels in distress and raid the Norman castles at every opportunity, you'll want to consider the Swordplay factor. If you want to enjoy fame and fortune at the tournaments, a good Jousting ability is essential.

After your selection, you visit Sherwood Forest where Robin of Locksley explains the situation to you. Then, play commences with a colorful map of Britain divided into 18 territories (and that lawless region known as Sherwood Forest). At this point, six different colored regions will be displayed and the other territories will reflect a dull neutrality. The colored regions represent the home regions of the player and his two Saxon brothers, as well as the three dastardly Normans. The player has the opportunity to "Read Map" at this time. By reading the map, the player can determine which territories are most advantageous to conquer in terms of gold and vassals. Later in the game, the color coded map will allow the player to tell at a glance how he is faring and who his most dangerous opponent happens to be. Next, the player has the opportunity to "Build Army." A window which resembles a piece of parchment with handwritten figures informs you of the costs of men-at-arms, knights, catapults, and castles. Unlike many games and governmental budgets, you can save what you don't spend from year to year so it may be a good idea to hold some back for future development (see Strategic Notes below).

Next, the player should "Build the Campaign Army." It doesn't hurt to send all of your army out on campaign for the first turn, but the player should remember that the amount of men left in the Home Army in the future determines the defensive value of **ALL** his castles. After creating the campaign army, the player may "Select a Territory to Conquer" and proceed to the combat phase by sending forth the campaign army. In the combat phase, a "parchment" window informs the player of



the strength of the opposition and offers three combat options: 1) Ferocious Attack, 2) Stand and Attack, or 3) Wild Retreat. In addition to the basic strategic decisions of determining the field of battle (selecting the territory to be conquered) and solving logistical problems (in this case, simply building the campaign army and sending them forth with proper balance and support), the player must decide on which of three occasions he will enlist Robin Hood's support. Robin adds the equivalent of five knights to the player's campaign army and an appropriate ratio of foot soldiers. According to the folks at Master Designer Software, Robin helps the player the most in siege situations because his alliance effectively decreases the enemy by 100 men at arms. If the player is more interested in plunder than prestige and power, Robin will also improve the chances of raiding a Norman castle successfully.

THE CAT THAT ROCKED THROUGH WALLS!

Once the player has conquered the intervening territories, he may want to besiege a Norman castle. *Strategic Note*: It seems prudent to suggest that the

Continued on pg. 68

THE COMMODORE KEY

by Roy Wagner

A PREVIEW OF HABITAT

Hopefully by the time you are reading this column, HABITAT from Quantum-Link will be available for online access. Refreshing your memory, HABITAT is a real-time, animated world of adventure available to C64/128 owners. It is a co-production from QuantumLink and LucasFilms. It has been running a bit late in becoming available for the public. At last check, it was still in alpha (development staff) testing.

If you would like to get somewhat of a preview of HABITAT without actually signing up with QuantumLink, there is a new independent game on the market that is very similar to some of HABITAT. The game is LABYRINTH from Activision. The similarity is not accidental since the game was done by Lucasfilms Games. It is based upon the Jim Henson (of Muppet fame) movie Labyrinth.

The game begins as a pure text, two word sentence adventure. The sentences are constructed by using the cursor keys to select from a list of possible words. Another way to get the word you need is to enter the first letter or two, and the word from the list will be accessed. You then cursor left over to a list of words related to the first word. A very simple vocabulary and sentence structure that is easy for those of any reading age to use. You press 'return' to use your sentence or cursor back to change it.

The object of this first part is to get you to the movies, buy some popcorn (to get quarters) and find your seat. The "movie" is just about to begin and you will be playing the leading role. Once the movie has begun, the game changes to an animated adventure. Not just text, but text entry as described above, with static and animated graphics. Your movement is done using a joystick. You must now interact with several other characters.

This game is very well done with an excellent user interface. From what I have seen of HABITAT, the graphics and particularly the character representation are very similar. This is a challenging and fun game. As with other LucasFilm Games, this one is "state-of-the-art" and highly recommended.

A GAME OF CHANCE

SHANGHAI from Activision is a game that is very similar to familiar solitaire card games. Except in this case, "tiles" from the Chinese game of Mah Jongg are used. There are 144 tiles stacked randomly in a flat, five level pyramid shape. Each tile has three other similar matching tiles. The tiles are removed in pairs with the object being to remove ALL tiles.

In my opinion, the odds are highly against a perfect game. So the challenge is to do your best. You can also play against various time limits or against another player. There is some strategy involved and moves can be taken back as far back as you want to go, but really so much of the end result is luck. When you think that you cannot find any more matches, you can let the computer "find" one or more. A joystick is used to select the matches and game options.

Only one game in progress can be saved. Only with the Tournament option are the scores saved. This game can be quite addictive with it being very hard to "just turn off the machine", but it can likewise be frustrating since so much of the end result is based on the stacking of the tiles. The display on the C64 is monochrome (white on a red background). On the C64, the patterns and stacks are hard to discern (soon your eyes match the screen). On the Amiga the display is outstanding with the pieces actually looking very much like colorful, ivory tiles. I think the game is overpriced ($35 for C64/128, $40 - $45 for other computers).

OUT FOR A SPIN

In previous issues of this magazine, I have mentioned that Activision would be bringing in some of the best games from other countries under the Electronic Dreams label. Two of them are now available, SPINDIZZY and ROCKY HORROR SHOW.

SPINDIZZY has some visual similarity to MARBLE MADNESS from EA. Each screen contains a small piece of a much larger 386 piece maze that represents a strange artificial world. You use a joystick to control the movement of your mapping device that appears on the screen as a marble, a top, or a gyroscope. The latter is most accurate for movement. Using the function keys, you can change your point of view and the "M" key gives you a map of the area you have explored. There are turns and hills and ice and water to make movement very challenging. There are lifts (elevators) and other surprises that must be activated with one or two switches.

Each new screen is very quickly generated by the computer, rather than disk access. There is a very catchy tune that plays continuously. Though not offensive, the only way to silence it is to use your volume control. You can pause a game in progress, but not save it and high scores are not saved. This game has a lot to offer and is an excellent value.

ROCKY HORROR SHOW is based on the "ever" popular cult film of the same name. It has been continuously running at theaters for over ten years. This game has been a BIG hit in England. Looking at the game, it is certainly hard to tell why it has been so popular. It is rather crudely programmed in a style that is very recognizable as a low priced English game.

The premise of the game is to keep your clothes on while you try to find and assemble the parts of a puzzle (the De-Medusa machine) before the mansion turns into a spacecraft and blasts off. There are several characters from the movie that will do their best to prevent you from succeeding. You can play the role of either Brad or Janet. If you lose your clothes, you must find them before you can continue towards your goal. The game is a challenge, but is it worth it? I think not.

The graphics are a rough attempt at three dimensions and the joystick movement is awkward. I think you'd have more fun seeing the movie (Friday at Midnight in most major cities), even if it means seeing it again. ■

IWO JIMA - 1945 FALKLANDS 82

by M. Evan Brooks



Name:	Iwo Jima 1945/Falklands 82
Players:	Solitaire only
System:	Commodore 64/128
Price:	$19.95
Designer:	John Bethell
Publisher:	Firebird Licensees P.O. Box 49 Ramsey, NJ 07446

This British design is the second in a series (**Battle of Britain/Midway** being the first). With a price under twenty dollars, and offered at discount for c. $10, its affordability is not in question. But is the simulation both playable and historically accurate?

The answer to the former question is a resounding affirmative; the latter must be answered in the negative. This is not to say that the games are to be avoided; rather, it is to suggest that these games be recommended for the novice. As such, they provide an interesting and enjoyable introduction to the hobby of computer wargaming. Even the grognard tires of complexity, and with playing times under an hour, these games provide good value.

This reviewer's initial reaction was to wonder what similarities the Falklands would have with Iwo Jima. The answer is that both campaigns involved an amphibious campaign against an enemy generally unable or unwilling to contest the beachhead landings.

With various playability levels and the ability to save the game in mid-stream, user interface is relatively clean and easy (Iwo utilizes joystick, while Falklands uses keystroke inputs). Graphics are adequate, with terrain and units being relatively easy to recognize and identify. In both scenarios, the player must decisively win by a certain turn; Iwo requires elimination of all Japanese units, while Falklands requires control of all "major" settlements. Naval gunfire and air support are handled abstractly, with little player ability to alter the consequences thereto.

While both games are eminently playable, their historical accuracy is admittedly low. Iwo, while showing the island, never delineates the ground scale. Furthermore, movement capabilities in differing terrain types are mentioned but not detailed as to the exact effect. Even more important, the designer notes that while over 100,000 American troops were involved in the subjugation of Iwo, the game only has an American force of 30,000; this insures playability. Furthermore, the design notes state that most indirect fire weapons were capable of firing the breadth of the isand; therefore, ranges have been curtailed to enhance game value. Naval gunfire is impacted by kamikaze strikes until the airfields have been seized; thereafter, a Japanese submarine stalks the naval vessels and inflicts damage; as the designer admits, no such submarine attack developed, but it "could have". Once again, playability over historicity; this is not malum in se, and it is laudatory that the designer clearly expresses his biases and adjustments to history.

Falklands does delineate a distance scale (c. 1.8 miles per movement "hex"), and has the same defects as IIwo. Historical accuracy has been sacrificed in that Argentine morale has been

increased in order to allow a viable enemy, terrain access has been made easier for most units (historically, Argentine forces had the mobility of quasi-pillboxes), and helicopters have been excluded as these would totally tip the balance of the game to the British.

What the Falklands does not really simulate is the decisive factor in the campaign -- the naval battle. While hindsight allows one to say of course the British would win, historically, the naval batttle could have gone the other way. If the British had suffered the loss of or damage to a carrier, all the air support could well have been withdrawn. Britain simply did not have the assets to replace a crippled carrier.

But so much for historical accuracy. The fact remains that both simulations are tense battles. The computer can be beaten at all levels, but the novice player may well have a tense campaign. With time constraints and limited forces, one must identify and prioritize targets before beginning. Moving without a plan or concept is a sure key to defeat.

Iwo requires extermination of all enemy units; a landing followed by a general advance to the east is the best strategy. While two Japanese units are ensconced in the southwest, leaving one indirect fire unit and an infantry unit to call in gunfire support will prove adequate. The key to gunfire support is to use a relatively weak infantry unit and keep it out of range; while it cannot fire or be fired upon, it does have the ability to call down massive naval gunfire support. Similarly, as Japanese artillery begins destroying American units, the player may utilize similar tactics with the weaker units while the stronger ones close in for the assault. P.S. pray for good weather! (naval support is not available in poor weather turns).+

Similarly, in Falklands, one must seize the settlements. British commandos and SAS units are capable of reconaissance; by using one of these units at San Carlos, it will reveal most units within 5 hexes. These will usually be unwilling to engage the British unit, so this lone recon unit may well seize two settlements and be available for a link-up and assault mission later. While the documentation cautions against a landing at Port Stanley (since it is likely to be heavily defended), this reviewer recommends exactly such an approach. Argentine units will not come to the assistance of their beleaguered comrades, and a landing at Cow Bay or Uranie Sound simply leaves the British with too much terrain to cover in too few turns. Also, most Argentine units in Cow Bay may then be cut off and ignored by the British. Judicious use of air strikes and naval gunfire should then win the battle. Again, implementation of gunfire support is the same as Iwo, and one prays for good weather.

In summary, these games, while not historically accurate (and in all truth, they do not hold themselves out as such), have relatively high play value. Documentation is more complete than one would expect, although some surplus pages may be included. The lack of hard copy terrain maps was missed. Also, this reviewer's copy had the disk labels reversed; but these marketing errors were relatively trivial. While Iwo/Falklands may not be to the taste of the experienced wargamer, they may prove just the ticket to gaining another convert to computer conflict simulations. Remember veterans, you did not begin with campaign for north africa. Thus, based upon the "bang for the buck" theory, this program is well justified; if one desires to learn valid lessons, then one should look elsewhere..

by Roy Wagner

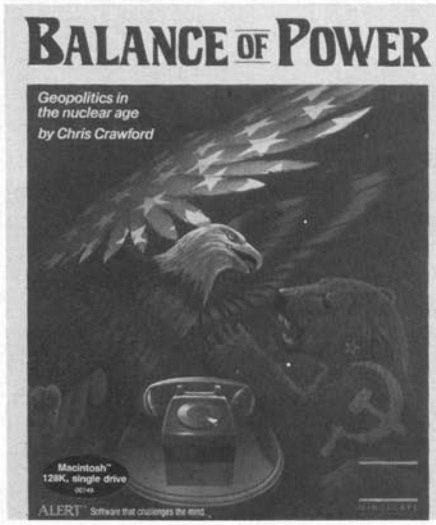
BALANCE OF POWER

Balance of Power (*BOP*) is a conversion of Chris Crawford's latest game. It was done originally for the Macintosh. The time and creative effort put into this game nearly lead him to financial (and probably other forms of) bankruptcy. *BOP* is distributed by Mindscape which is establishing an excellent reputation for quality games for the Amiga.

BOP is an excellent simulation of world wide, bi-polar (USA vs. USSR) politics that can end in nuclear destruction. The emphasis is not on nuclear warfare, but rather on maintaining political prestige. This is accomplished by the affect that your actions have in influencing the events that occur within various countries of the world.

The program contains a VERY extensive set of data and uses the techniques of "artificial intelligence" (computer algorithms) to portray a realistic exchange of political interaction between the USA and USSR in 62 other countries of the world. The "global" picture had to be minimized to fewer countries and a bi-polar interaction to make the "game/simulation" more playable.

It is very much an Amiga game with excellent use of menus, windows, and mouse, but retains much of the appearance of its Macintosh origins. There is some slight addition of color. There is a large quantity of background data available that alone gives the game tremendous educational value. There is far more to this game than is initially apparent. This is a game of prestige and influence which



may only be brought about by the passage of time.

Game play is easy at four possible levels of difficulty. Each level introduces more options that must be considered before making a political move. The game comes with outstanding documentation written by Chris. He explains many of the development decisions that had to be made in producing the final version of the game. He has also written a very extensive book published by Microsoft that goes into much greater detail in discussing background information, designer notes and game strategy. This game is HIGHLY recommended.

THE PAWN

Distributed in the USA by Firebird, *The Pawn* originates from England and has been made available for a number of different computers. Though not utilizing the "standard" Amiga conventions, it fully uses ALL the features that make the Amiga the unequaled computer that it is.

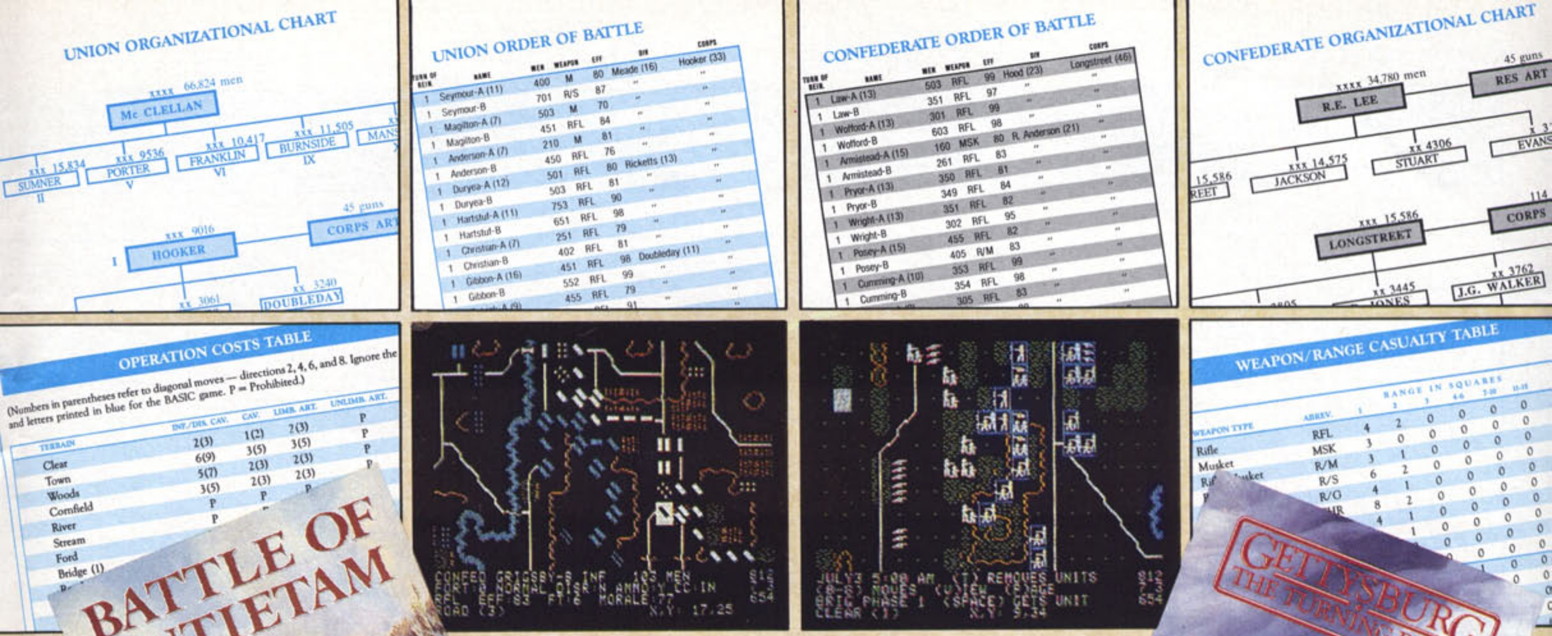
The Pawn is a graphic text adventure game. It starts off with an outstanding four channel stereo tune that lasts over four minutes using digitized instruments. Though you can interrupt the tune to begin the game, it is enjoyable to let it play on. The sound is new age and very pleasant. While the music plays, an excellent high resolution graphic is displayed.

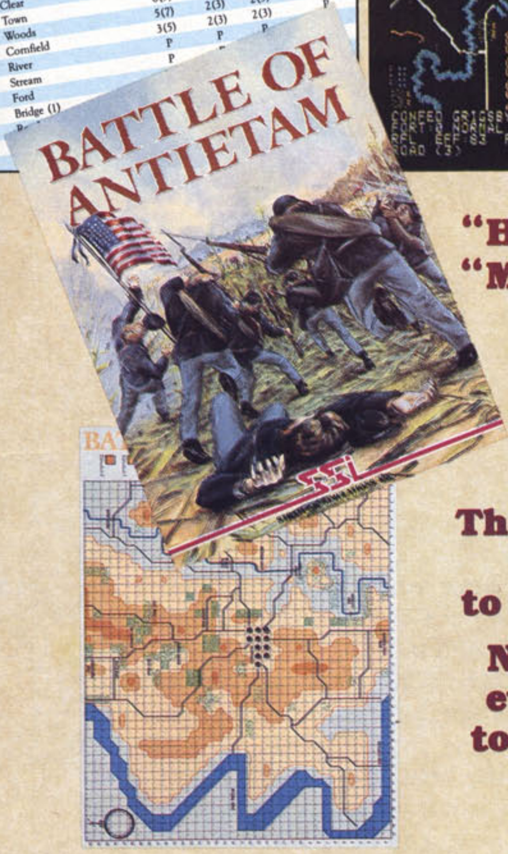
The game options are selected using the mouse from scroll down menus that are somewhat different from the standard Amiga menus. Options let you toggle between having graphics pictures displayed or not, between normal size or large text, and even between having the computer simply type everything on the screen or use the synthesizer to *speak* all the text to you. The program also allows all text to be sent to the printer or not.

The parser is very sophisticated and accepts quite complicated sentences. It will also recognize certain one or two letter commands There are also the usual options of saving a game to disk by name or loading one. A rather interesting new option is that of being able to define function keys for commonly entered text sentences, eg. "get all". There are even some keys that can be used to edit the commands you have entered.

The graphics are very nice. They are certainly the best that I have seen on any graphic ad-

Continued on pg. 55







"HIGHLY RECOMMENDED"
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"REVOLUTIONARY"
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"A MUST"

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— Computing Today! May 1986

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THOMAS M. DISCH'S

AMNESIA™

by Scorpia

You wake in a hotel room. You have no money. No clothes. No memory. You don't know where you are or how you got there. You look in the mirror, and a stranger stares back at you. Is this you? Who are you, anyway? And then,the phone rings. . .

So begins *Amnesia*, by Thomas Disch. As you might imagine, the focal point of the game is finding out who you really are, what is going on, and what your relationships are to the various characters you meet throughout the game. Unlike many adventures (based on this premise or not), there are few objects to acquire. Most of your time will be spent making phone calls, riding the N.Y. subway system, getting enough to eat, scrounging up money, and sleeping in a ramshackle tenement.

Although you start in a hotel room, you won't be staying there for long; events will soon force you to take to the streets, penniless. Then you're on your own, trying to survive as a pauper in a city you don't know, while attempting to piece together the fragments of your life and identity. Neither of these is especially easy to do, particularly when it seems you may be more than one person.

Are you John Cameron, supposed fiance of Alice Dudley, and scheduled to marry her that very evening in the hotel chapel? Or are you Xavier Hollings, murderer and escapee from a Texas prison? Or both? Or someone else entirely? Can you REALLY trust what people tell you about yourself? And what about those disjointed flashbacks, of a southwestern jail with merciless guards? Who is the woman you dream of at night in the filthy tenement?

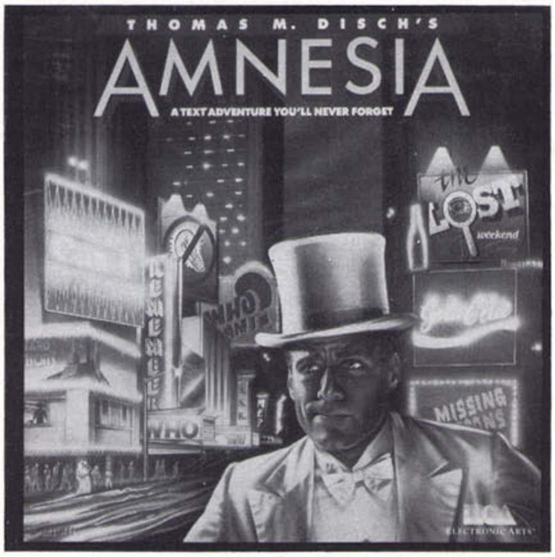
The questions buzz around in your head as you struggle to find the answers. Your only resources are your own wits and a small address book with a few telephone numbers, all marked with uninformative and unfamiliar initials. But telephones cost money. And money is your over-riding concern, at first. It pays for the calls, the hot dogs, and the subway tokens. It is not easy to come by.

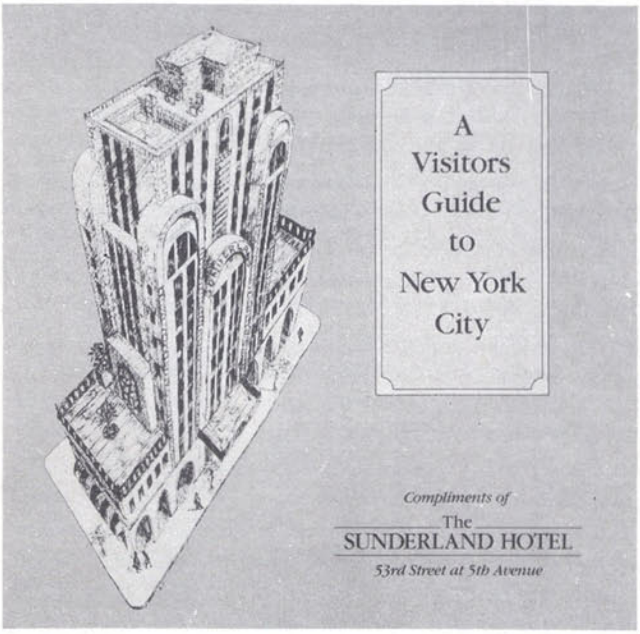
Right around now, you're probably thinking: gosh, this game sounds intriguing and exciting! Unfortunately, it really isn't. Like other adventures I could mention, but won't, *Amnesia* begins with a fascinating premise, then falters in the execution of it.

One problem is that, from time to time, the game decides what you will do, and then forces you to do it, whether you want to or not. You find this out pretty early in the game, while you're still in the hotel. You need clothes. There are none in the hotel room. However, the hotel brochure mentions a health club on the top floor. Obviously, this is a good place to look for something to wear.

I'm not giving much away here; during this portion of the adventure, you are practically led around by the nose, and you'll end up in the club sooner or later anyway. So you take the elevator up there, enter the men's locker room, and hunt around. You find a sweatsuit. Just as you pick it up, two men enter the room.

Now, what would you do in this situation? Sev-





eral things come to mind: saunter out, and get dressed back in your room; casually put on the suit, ignoring the men; wait to see what happens. . . you get the idea. Unfortunately, the program has an idea of its own. The moment you try to leave the locker room, or put on the suit, you panic. That's right, you panic and run into the sauna, where you promptly collapse.

There is a reason for this, of course. This is how you get your little green satchel that contains the address book. It was in your locker (which you don't remember), and one of the attendants cuts open the lock while you're out cold. Without question, this is one of the poorest devices I've come across in an adventure game in a long time.

There are a few other places in the game where similar things happen. One to watch out for is changing clothes after you leave the hotel. Now, you'd think that the first thing to do is change out of that eye-catching white tux you're wearing. After all, the police are after you, so the less visible you are, the better. Well, it's not a very good idea.

Why not? Simple. For plot purposes, the game requires you to be wearing that tux at a certain place and time. So, you can't be allowed to change out of it. Of course, at the beginning, you don't know this, and you drag your jeans and t-shirt and sneakers with you to the tenement, and put them on. Then you walk out the door to the street. Your zipper splits open. Then the back side of the pants. In no time at all, a cop is on hand to drag you to the local police station, where you are recognized as the escaped convict, and soon go to an ignominious end.

Now, if you have to be wearing the tux at a specific time and place, fine. But everything I just mentioned in the above paragraph happens automatically.

You do NOT get a chance to duck back into the tenement and change clothes again. Once you step out the door, you're sunk. No second chances. It's all over. Time to reboot and restore.

There are further annoyances (to say the least) in *Amnesia*. Your character has an energy level, which tends to drop rapidly if you don't eat something. You can only move around a few hours (game time), before being warned that you need rest. At that point, you must eat something soon (if you have money), or nip back to the tenement and sleep awhile. The difficulty is that a reasonably healthy adult male should be able to go most of the day without having to eat something. You have to be pretty frail to collapse if you don't have your morning Wheaties. But that's what will happen eventually.

In the meantime, you're making phone calls to the numbers in the address book, at 25 cents a clip, and riding the subway at a $1 per token, one way. Money goes fast, all right. Of course, you do have a few ways of obtaining some, and there are a few spots in the game where you can pick up some unexpected bucks. A windfall of $5 can make you feel rich.

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NEWS AND VIEWS FROM THE GAMERS' FORUM ON- LINE CONFERENCE

by Patricia Fitzgibbons

Recently, The Gamers' Forum on CompuServe was the site of a special, real-time, online conference on the subject of computer role-playing games. Nine game designers and company representatives spoke out about current and planned products, hard disks, the Apple //gs, artificial intelligence, program bugs, color graphics, and what they liked about each other's games.

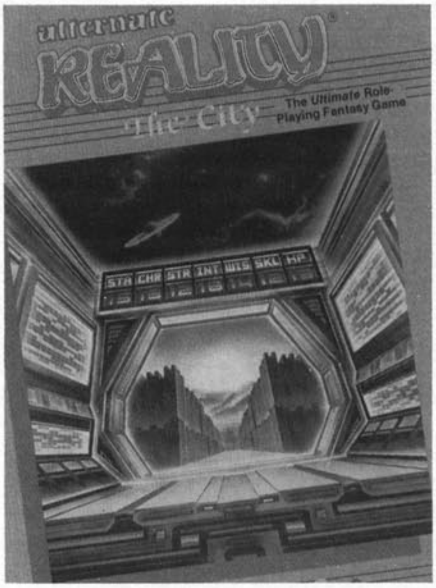
Conference participants included The Gamers' Forum sysops and members, and: Robert Woodhead from Sir-Tech (Wizardry); Rod McConell from Binary Systems (Starflight); Paul Murray and Keith Brors from Strategic Simulations (Wizard's Crown); Ken Jordan, Jim Ratcliff and John Butrovich from Datasoft/Intellicreations (Alternate Reality); Brian Fargo from Interplay (The Bard's Tale); and Steve Meuse from Origin Systems (Ultima).

After the conference guests introduced themselves, a marathon three-hour question and answer session commenced. What follows is an edited version of the huge (60K) conference transcript.

FRABBITZ: Robert, I'm curious about the way a lot of games still come out first on Apple and Commies, and IBM seems to take a long time for ports. Is that due to you guys originally being 6502 programmers or is it due to the IBM being more of a problem for games like these?

ROBERT WOODHEAD: Well, partially it's because we all originally started on the Apple and are thus more at home on it. And partially it's because the Apple market is bigger than the PC market. Also, the development systems that are available for the Apple are better than those on, say, the C-64. At RWI (Robert Woodhead, Inc.) we have over the last few years been developing a different approach. We design our games for a "virtual machine" that is based on UCSD (Apple: Pascal). We write interpreter and "graphic bios" for each individual machine only once, and then only have to write the actual program once -- it runs without changes on all the machines we support. We even went so far as to move the text outside the program so it could be converted into other languages easily, without changing the program. This lets us bring out a product on a lot of machines at once, without "version related" bug problems. But on the flipside, it's taken most of my time for 1.5 years, which is why certain "un-named" products are so delayed.

WYVERN: Dungeon Ken and Jim, I am playing **Alternate Reality** on a Commodore SX (I know that



is my first mistake). Currently one of my characters is in a crash loop cycle. I have experienced up to if not more than 12 crashes in a two-hour session. I can't get this character out of it. Is it lost? Is there hope? When will the IBM version and my sanity be available?

DUNGEON KEN: Once a character's data gets corrupted it is very hard to recover. We had a lot of problems with the Commodore disk interface. This causes the database (character info) to contain garbage data that totally screws up the menu. The IBM version should be out soon after Christmas.

DRAGON-RIDER: Ken and Jim: Can you give us a more definite date on when **Alternate Reality** for the ST is going to come out? And what will on it (i.e., guilds, etc)?

DUNGEON KEN: The 16-bit City (Mac, Atari ST then later Amiga) should be out by Christmas. The Dungeon (C-64, Atari 8 bit) should be out at that time also. Just finishing up monster animations and tweaking. Both have guilds.

MS. WIZ: To Brian Fargo: Will future releases of **Bard's Tale** allow for easier starting of a new character? Bard's Tale is almost impossible to get a new character started. In fact, one must "cheat" to do so.

BRIAN FARGO: I had a feeling someone would ask me this question. Yes, **Destiny Knight** (the sequel) and all the new adaptations of Bard's Tale have been made easier to get started on.

CHRIS CHAPMAN: Ken, I saw the ST version of City at the summer CES and I was very impressed. I was wondering about your opinion of the ST as a game machine, and also the progress of other **Alternate Reality** modules such as Arena, Palace, Wilderness, etc.?

DUNGEON KEN: The ST is a very nice game machine. It is really something when you are used to 8-bit 64K machines. As far as other modules go, we are getting the 8-bit Dungeon out first. We will probably bundle some of the other scenarios together in the future.

TPP: This is to any and all of you. Have any of you read up on **artificial intelligence**? And do any of you plan to put it in any future games?

ROBERT WOODHEAD: Yes, it's easy to fake, hard to do right, and the machines are getting powerful enough to support it.

ROD McCONNELL: I think that rather than say faked you might say low IQ.

SSI: Hear, hear!

BRIAN FARGO: We plan on using AI techniques in our games to create NPCs that have some personality.

ROBERT WOODHEAD: It's also important to note that AI isn't appropriate for a lot of things.

DUNGEON KEN: On 8-bit machines you just fake it.

ROBERT WOODHEAD: In **Wizardry #5**, we write up "scripts" for each of the special creatures that are executed each time you do something with/to them. They let the player influence the internal state of the NPC. Not AI but flexible enough to give some startling results. (The stuff in Starflight is impressive, by the way.)

ROD McCONNELL: We used AI in several portions of **Starflight**, notably communications. The aliens will learn about you and change accordingly. We also plan to use more extensive AI in coming sequels.

TOR: Will there be an IBM version of **Bard's Tale**, and will I be able to use my Wizardry characters with it?



BRIAN FARGO: Yes, we plan on releasing a version in early '87, and we do plan on supporting Wizardry characters.

ROBERT WOODHEAD: But we won't be supporting Bard's Tale characters, by the way.

WYVERN: Rod McConnell: My hubby and I are playing **Starflight** side by side. Sort of dueling computers here. I started later than he and am about a month in game time behind him. I have already had the notice about Arth's sun flare. He has never had this notice. What triggers this notice? (Great game.)

ROD McCONNELL: Hmmmm, are you sure? All notices are triggered by date.

WYVERN: Absolutely sure! This is not the notice on the notice board, but the notice upon entering the system.

ROD McCONNELL: Nice to know the game's inspiring togetherness. Well, that's a function of the science officer's skill level.

GAIL: To Robert and Brian: Do you plan to have enhanced versions for Amiga and Atari ST in future games? It's discouraging to see the same graphics as on the C-64.

ROBERT WOODHEAD: Yes. All Wiz games will be out on the Amiga and ST with windows and hi-res graphics. Our machine-independent system lets us re-do the graphics for particular machines. One Japanese version, for example, has 640x400 8-color graphics and we have some amazing graphics for it.

BRIAN FARGO: Most definitely, there's nothing worse than when people do cheap ports. The Amiga version of Bard's has been in development for 9 months and features digitized sound, 600K of graphics, and a complete mouse interface. All the other versions will also push the machines to their limits. The GS will be awesome.

SSI: I'd like to poll any **Wizard's Crown** users on

a question for Wizard's Crown II. Do you prefer dungeons with separated characters, or do you want a single character representing the party in the dungeon?

NIGHTIE/SYSOP: Single character! So slow with individuals.

FRABBITZ: Single chars for me, too!

LORINI/ASS'T SYSOP: Seen both, and I prefer single char myself.

WYVERN: I prefer one character to represent all characters in a dungeon.

GAIL: Single character.

FRABBITZ: Wouldn't mind more than one char if they were independent.

THE DUFFER: Sounds unanimous!

DRAGON-RIDER: To the Intellicreations/DataSoft team and Robert Woodhead:

Will the ST versions of your games (**Wizardry** and **Alternate Reality**) require color?

INTELLICREATIONS: We will do two versions. Each will be a separate SKU (a single stock item). The monochrome version will probably be available directly from IntelliCreations.

ROBERT WOODHEAD: The new version of Wizardry we are putting up on all the machines supports multiple resolutions. We did this because many machines (especially in Japan) have different resolution modes. On the IBM PC and ST, you can choose between color and monochrome by holding down a key when booting, and you get different, optimized, character sets and graphics. On the subject of SKUs, we are going to a package that contains versions of Wizardry with 2 different machines in the same package, for example, Apple/IBM. This reduces the stocking costs for dealers, which is becoming a big problem these days.

THE DUFFER: This is for Brian first and then the others. I'd like to know if you will be supporting true **EGA mode** (enhanced color graphics) in future releases of your games. We all would like it for Starflight also (for Rod).

BRIAN FARGO: With the popularity of EGA these days we will be supporting it.

ROD MCCONNELL: February '87!

INTELLICREATIONS: **Alternate Reality** will be supporting true EGA only if we can get the frame rate to an acceptable level.

LORINI/ASS'T SYSOP: My question is also to all of you. I note that D&D is used for the character creation in nearly every computer RPG. Do any of you have any plans to change this? D&D's emphasis on killing in order to develop the character frequently gets in the way of real enjoyment of the game...at least for me.

ROBERT WOODHEAD: Lorini, the problem is that these games have to have one or more "focuses" in order to keep you playing. In our games they are exploration, combat, puzzle-solving, and development of character. Dungeon games are tightly focused because it makes it much easier to actually do the game on the computer. Without the combat, there would be no conflict and risk, which is important. If you want to know why we have too tightly focused, the answer is if we make it too broad, the game gets boring and "too big." Part of the problem with space games, for example, is that their focus is too broad to fit in our computers. **Starflight** is the best I've seen, mostly because the



computer it runs on has more power than, say, an Apple //, and that lets the programmers do more and expand the focus. In 5 years we will have machines in which a space game can be as tight as a dungeon game.

BRIAN FARGO: I agree that combat is an integral part of our games, but some RPGs have no combat. It's all a matter of taste.

SSI: Yes, when EP are given for doing in-character things, normally a GM can decide whether a player is abusing the system. A computer can't. So,

if, for instance, we gave EP for curing someone, then players would just cure someone even though they don't need to be cured.

ROD MCCONNELL: It's much more difficult to model other kinds of interaction than combat. Things like conversations branch into countless alternatives much too quickly. What we've tried to do in Starflight is emphasize problem solving rather than outright Ramboism. Sometimes it develops more character to hold your fire when dealing with aliens.

DEAN: How about letting us play games off our **hard disks**?

ROBERT WOODHEAD: Well, part of the problem for me is that we don't run Wizardry under any one operating system (Starflight runs under MS-DOS, for example), so supporting hard disks is a real pain. What we are doing is in the new versions, you can put all of the disks into any disk drives you have and the program will find them (no disk swapping) and any extra RAM you have >64K is used as a cache and so the game speeds up a lot.

BRIAN FARGO: It's sometimes not technically feasible for us due to the fact some of our programs use direct disk access to gain speed and disk space.

SSI: We have two reasons: 1) We don't program on those machines (Keith and I), and 2) if you allow disks to be copied onto hard disks you abandon copy protections.

ROBERT WOODHEAD: By the way, the copy protection on Starflight -- the codewheel -- is brilliant. Can I steal it for one of my games, Rod?

INTELLICREATIONS: I am always uncomfortable with this issue. I am always afraid someone will damage their hard disk with our software. **Alternate Reality/The City** (Tandy) runs under OS9, therefore, hard disk.

We are thinking about other machines.

WYVERN: Why do most games available for IBM and compatibles limit themselves to Yuk Yellow, Awful Aqua, and Putrid Pink? I have a compatible just dying for FULL COLOR!

ROBERT WOODHEAD: These are the basic colors available for the PC. You can sometimes do better, but it takes a lot of effort. We are now using professional computer artists in order to alleviate this problem.

ROD MCCONNELL: I assume that you are referring to RGB monitors only. There are great colors (relative to RGB) to be had using the composite mode.

FRABBITZ: Rod, thanks again for the codewheel, and what I really like about **Starflight** is its playing life...800 planets is a heck of a lot of arrow hitting! However, right now, Arth has been flared, the Veloxi are trying to kill me because I tried to land on their planet, the Elowan don't like me either, and the Gazurtoids are still trying to wipe me out. Any point in continuing this game, or should I start over?

ROD MCCONNELL: If Arth has already flared, it's going to be pretty hard to rescue the system, isn't it? We suggest you start over. Sorry, but that's life in the big Universe. But we will consider this problem in the revs and ports.

NIGHTIE/SYSOP: This is a bit of a recap, but I would like all the guests to say, very briefly, which computer role-playing games we can expect to see very soon from each of their companies.

ROBERT WOODHEAD: **Return of Werdna**, if all goes well.

ROD MCCONNELL: Christmas came early for Binary, but next Christmas you can expect MANY ports of **Starflight**.

SSI: **Phantasie** (Mac and Atari 800). **Gemstone Healer** (Apple). **Phantasie II** (ST). Possibly **Rings of Zilfin II.**

INTELLICREATIONS: **AR-The Dungeon**: 8-bit (C64, Atari, Apple); **AR-The City**: 16-bit (Mac, ST); **AR-CoCo,** whenever Tandy picks it up.

THE SILICON KNIGHT: I was just wondering if you are planning to take advantage of the new capabilities of the **Apple //GS**.

ROBERT WOODHEAD: Yep.

INTELLICREATIONS: Not until there is a substantial user base.

ROD MCCONNELL: We agree. It isn't positive that it'll be worth our time. Also, for now we've got our hands full.

DRAGON-RIDER: Robert, you mentioned that **Wizardry** would be out for the **Atari 800** soon since the 800 has only 48K (as opposed to the XLs which have 64K). Will Wizardry for the 800 have to leave anything out?

ROBERT WOODHEAD: Well, we hope to get it to run in 48k, but if we can't, we will have to make it for XLs only.

LORINI/ASS'T SYSOP: About **Starflight** to Rod: You've talked about the AI routines in Starflight and they are really enjoyable. Is there any randomization involved in those things, or are they all preset? By that I mean, if you talk to the Elowan, let's say 5 times, will they always say the same thing on the 5th time? Or is there a chance that they may or may not?

ROD MCCONNELL: Like the solar winds, the aliens have their own whims and free will...to some extent. If you do EXACTLY the same thing each of those 5 times at EXACTLY the same times, you'll probably get identical responses, but we've never tried testing it that far.

ROBERT WOODHEAD: The great god I:=Random MOD X, eh, Rod?

ROD MCCONNELL: There is a random number

generator used in the % talkativeness of the aliens to tell them when they should feel like talking; the chances that you could get it to perform identically twice are very slim.

LORINI/ASS'T SYSOP: Then there is some randomization involved. The reason I'm asking is because the Mechan 9 told me a location which I later lost and I was hoping that they would tell me again, but they haven't, so I had to go back to an earlier save. (Got Starflight disks everywhere, I'll tell ya!)

ROD MCCONNELL: Keep on asking them the same question. Eventually they'll return to the statement you're looking for.

DRAGON-RIDER: By the way, Robert, have you fixed the "Bishop bug"?

ROBERT WOODHEAD: No, and we won't...for reasons of tradition.

[As the conference wound down -- Ken Jordan left to hit the sack, Brian Fargo left to head out for a late date -- Steve Meuse of Origin Systems *dropped by to report the latest news about his company's products, including the Ultima series by Lord British.]*

STEVE MEUSE: **Ultima V** will be out for the Apple in late summer of '87. Ultima IV will be out for the IBM and the Mac the 1st quarter of '87. Moebius (C-64) is shipping. Ogre (IBM/ST) is in beta test. So is Autoduel (C-64). No word on Ultima IV translations for ST/Amiga, but Ultima III for those machines is shipping. Ultima V may have the possibility of transferring Ultima IV characters. Ultima I for the Apple will ship soon. All games will be designed for 64K machines, and we are reaffirming our commitment to the Apple //!

WARSHIP



Name:	Warship
System:	Apple, Atari, C-64
Players:	1 or 2
Designer:	Gary Grigsby
Price:	$59.95
Publisher:	Strategic Simulations Inc. 1046 N. Rengstorff Ave. Mountain View, CA 94043

by Bob Proctor

Warship is a game of naval surface combat in the Pacific theater of WWII. When I say surface combat, I mean MAJOR surface combat. No carriers, no subs, no PT boats, or armed merchantmen, thank you, just get out there with the heavys and shoot it up! Airpower is represented only abstractly so it is best for recreating the night engagements of the Southwest Pacific.

The basic character of the game makes it sort of a naval version of Kampfgruppe. They both come with a few scenarios and allow you to create more following either historical or hypothetical events. Both allow two-player games or solitaire with the computer playing either side. Both do a pretty fair job of limited intelligence, providing only the information that the commander on the spot would have had. Both are open-ended; they let you select the forces, the type of engagement to be fought and the map on which the battle takes place.

All in all, the game is another good effort by Grigsby and SSI. It combines realism and playability to a high degree.

The Game System

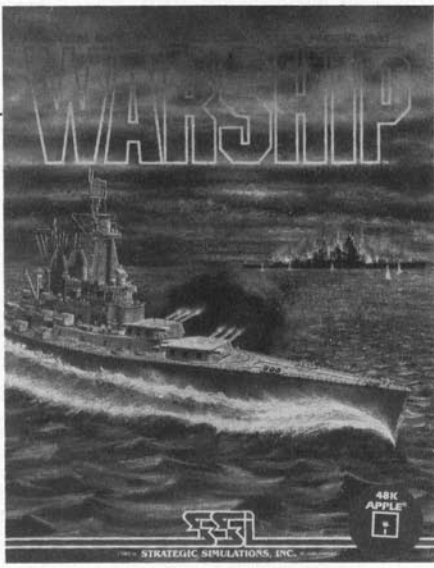
Warship is played in alternating turns but through the magic of the computer it seems more like a real-time game. The sequence is simple: first an Order Phase where ships are given instructions; then an Action Phase where these orders are carried out. The Action Phase represents two minutes of real time. Most wargames would dump you back into another Order Phase to start the next turn but *Warship* sheds that boardgame-style thinking and simply continues non-stop with another Action Phase. If you want to change any orders for your ships, you've got to ask for an Order Phase. To do so, hit the "O" key when the message "(O)rders?" appears on the screen.

The result of this is to greatly speed up play and provide continuous action over many turns. It also means you're pretty well stuck at the keyboard to handle emergencies as they arise. If you duck into the kitchen for another slice of pizza, you may find your ships sailing off the map or milling about aimlessly when you return. You have no Nelsons to take charge and save the day.

The best and most innovative part of the *Warship* system is the inclusion of two different Command Modes. Ship Mode lets you give orders to each individual ship: what direction to go, how fast, and what to shoot at. In Division Mode, you give orders to groups of ships. This not only simplifies orders and speeds up the battle, it has a more realistic feel. You wear the hat of the Admiral in charge of the force. You decide on formation, course and speed and you decide when to hold fire and when to open fire. You *don't* pick out targets for each individual ship.

What's great is the way these two modes integrate smoothly. You can switch back and forth freely during play. You could, for example, switch to Ship mode to give orders to one ship to launch torpedoes and then revert to Division mode. In a two-player game, each person can use either mode.

As you give course and speed to the lead ship in each division, all of the other ships in the division follow it's movement. If you've ordered them to adopt a Line formation, they will automatically sail so as to form a line behind the lead ship and then maintain it, matching speed and turning at the same place the lead ship turns. If you order a Parallel formation, they match course instantly; all ships turn at the same time so that if they had been in a line, they would now be sailing on parallel tracks. In Ship mode, you can order a ship to follow another and thus create the equivalent of a Line formation.





One of the major tactical concerns you have, as commander, is watching for ships in a Line formation that get slowed by damage. When this happens, all of the ships following them slow down to the same speed, even stop. It's worst if the second or third ship in line gets hit; the ship (or two) in front sails off to almost certain annihilation while those behind mill around uselessly. The solution to this is to immediately reassign the damaged ship to another division. (I've found that putting all of the cripples in division 9 works pretty well.) The following ship will then begin to close up with the ship that is in the lead. You must do this promptly as soon as you see a gap begin to open in the line. I always ask for an Orders phase whenever I take a torpedo hit so that I can check damage and speed and make corrections right away.

The map is 60,000 yds by 60,000 yds, or about 30 nautical miles square. This is bigger than it seems since most action will take place at night with visibility around 5 to 7 miles. The visibility can be set for each scenario. The map can have land on it or be Open Sea (all clear). A map of Savo Sound ("Ironbottom Sound") is included on the disk and you can create others. Maps are stored independently of scenarios and can be reused. It would be a fairly simple matter, for instance, to create a Battle of Savo Island scenario using the map provided.

There are three types of missions in *Warship*: battleline, bombardment, and transport. A battleline is simply the naval equivalent of the meeting engagement; neither side has any tactical objectives beyond giving more damage than they receive. In a bombardment mission, one of the sides is on its way to perform shore bombardment and can get points for exiting ships that still have firepower and ammo off one edge of the map. A transport mission is similar, points are awarded for exiting certain cargo vessels or destroyers designated as doing the transporting.

When playing most scenarios, it is possible for a ship to sail off any edge of the map. If this happens, the ship is permanently disengaged. You do this deliberately to score points or to protect a heavily damaged ship but you don't ever want to accidentally lose the services of a ship. There is no warning of an approaching edge in the Action Phase so it is a good idea to go to Orders every once in a while just to check on sea room if you have ships sailing toward the edge. If you are fighting a battleline engagement (so that exiting doesn't ever score points) in an open sea, then the map will automatically adjust to keep ships in play and ships can only disengage if they get more than 60,000 yards apart.

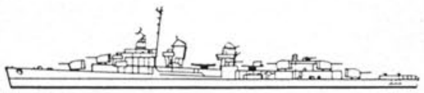
Scenarios

Warship comes with 4 scenarios. Three of these are historical, the first and second battles of Guadalcanal and the battle of Empress Augusta Bay. All three are Japanese bombardment missions.

The first occurred on the night of 11/13/42. A USN force of cruisers and destroyers intercepted an IJN force led by the battleships Kirishima and Hiei on its way to shoot up Henderson Field. The gutsy cruisers got cut up badly but prevented the bombardment. They damaged Hiei so badly that she was unable to get out of aircraft range and was sunk by planes the following day. This factor is represented in the game by giving more points for damage to the side (if any) that has air superiority.

On the following night, the US was waiting with battleships South Dakota and Washington. The

AMERICAN DESTROYER



DD FLETCHER

BRITISH BATTLESHIP



BB KING GEORGE V

Japanese returned, with Kirishima again, and ran into a buzzsaw. This battle, the second Battle of Guadalcanal, is probably the best scenario to start with. Let the computer take the IJN; you only have the two BB's and four destroyers to manage.

The third scenario, Empress Augusta Bay, took place the night after the invasion of Bougainville on 11/2/43. The Japanese sent two heavy and two light cruisers with six destroyers to shell the invasion. They were intercepted by four new Cleveland class light cruisers and eight destroyers. The IJN was turned back with the loss of a light cruiser but this is a very evenly matched battle and the best for two players.

The fourth scenario represents a battle that never happened. During the campaign for Leyte, Halsey was lured away from his position blocking the mouth of San Bernardino Strait by the Japanese carrier fleet. Had he stuck around, he would have intercepted the main body of the Imperial Combined Fleet on its way to Leyte Gulf. The resulting battle, pitting the most modern battleships of both fleets, would have been the biggest and possibly most spectacular surface engagement of the whole of WWII.

Rolling Your Own

The ship "library" includes 79 classes of ships so many other scenarios are possible. The Dutch ships that fought in the Java Sea are here. The British and Australians are here, so you can fight a "might-have-been" action against the Prince of Wales and Repulse. Types are distributed as follows:

Ship Type	IJN	USN	RN	Dutch
BB and BC	5	7	5	0
CA	4	5	2	0
CL	7	5	8	3
DD and DE	10	10	5	2
Totals	26	27	20	5

Combat

I won't bother to go into the formulas for calculating accuracy and damage since you never use them. The computer takes care of it all for you; it suffices to say that they are satisfactorily realistic.

There are 29 types of guns—from 18 inch to 3 inch—each rated for range, the size of the shell, and penetrating power. Add to this 5 types of torpedoes and defensive ratings for four types of armor: deck, belt, primary turret and secondary turret. This gives a realistic number of possible outcomes for hits, especially since special damage to steering, propulsion, bridge, fire control systems, and torpedo mounts is part of the action. Rarest of all, but most spectacular, is the hit that penetrates to the magazine.

During combat, the play is fast and furious. Each target ship is highlighted briefly by the cursor while a message at the bottom of the screen indicates the caliber of the gun that is firing. If a hit or near miss occurs, that too is shown. If an asterisk appears after the hit it means that the shell penetrated the armor at the point of impact. There is a Delay Factor that can be set to keep messages about penetrating hits on the screen longer but the delay is always zero if there are no hits or they fail to penetrate. Therefore most of the action reports go by so rapidly that you cannot easily keep track of all the data.

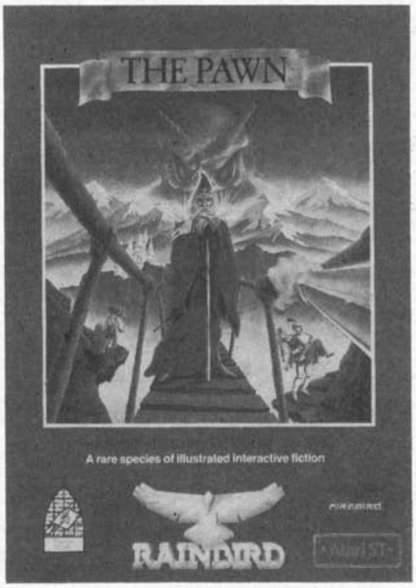
If you are used to playing naval miniatures or boardgames, you may miss the feeling of understanding that comes from knowing who's shooting at who and where each salvo falls. I must agree that *Warship* is far more realistic because of the limited knowledge and command control but sometimes I want to analyze an engagement, not relive it. I wish there was some (optional) way to do this in *Warship*, even if it made the games much longer.

Another small nitpick concerns watching the computer play both sides of a battle. In this mode, you can see the Japanese ships move but not the Allies unless they just happen to be close enough to be on the screen. Otherwise, the only time you see them is when the cursor jumps to them when they are under fire.

As you can see, there's not much wrong with this game. The subject may not be of interest to everyone but this game recreates the feel of nighttime surface combat better than any other game of any kind. Will we see an Atlantic version of it next?

Continued from pg. 42

venture. The object of the game is revealed as you play. It becomes quite obvious that the title of the game is taken from the role YOU play in the game. The documentation is exceptional in keeping with the theme of the



game. Both humor and challenge are present here, two of the key elements of any good adventure (along with an excellent parser and outstanding presentation). What more is needed? (Ed. Note: As the saying goes, "one man's poison is another man's meat". In CGW #32 Gregg Williams panned *The Pawn* in his Atari Playfield column. In his C-64 column in CGW #35, Roy Wagner will refer to the excellent job done in translating The Pawn to the C-64.)

COMMERCIAL VALUE IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

David Addison is the undisputed master of ABasiC from Metacomco. This version of BASIC originally came with the Amiga. It has now been replaced with AmigaBasic from Microsoft. David continues to produce outstanding games that he puts into the public domain. Public domain means that the games are readily available to anyone from User Groups, local and national BBSs and from Public Domain distributors (Fred Fish or Amicus). They can be obtained for the "cost" of transfer to a disk (between $1.50 and $10).

His games include MONOPOLY (you against three computer controlled players), BACKGAMMON, OTHELLO, CRIBBAGE, MILESTONE (like Mille Bourne), SOLITAIRE (Canfield and Klondike), and TUNNEL (3D maze). In most of these games, you play against a computer opponent. The graphic displays are outstanding with some use of sound. All of them are worth obtaining. The computer players are not a great challenge, so these games are excellent for beginners and also for those that like to win a few against the computer.

You will need a copy of ABasiC to run these games, but it quite often comes along with the game. Since you get the game source, you can easily change anything you don't like or use it to improve on the computer algorithm (game strategy). The games use the mouse for easy play. For the nominal cost of obtaining these games, they are an outstanding bargain. Highly recommended. [Ed. Note: Roy tells us that the above mentioned public domain games can be ordered on disk from P.D.Q. BACK, 13712 Claremont St., Westminster, CA 92683. The cost is $5.00.] ■

CHRIS CRAWFORD (Part 2)



This is second in our two-part interview with Chris Crawford, designer of games such as Eastern Front, Excalibur, Balance of Power, and the new Patton Vs. Rommel. Just as this interview was going to press, Microsoft Press released Chris's new book, Balance of Power, an account of the history of the game, the models of political behavior used in it and their basis in reality, and strategy for playing the game. To our knowledge, this is the first book devoted to one computer game which is not of the "How to Win at Pac-Man" genre of books.

Balance of Power is an excellent, well-written book. Chris shows us how he arrived at his underlying assumptions for the game—how he determined how countries should behave. He also narrates the process of designing the game—how he tested and refined Balance of Power—and his troubles finding a publisher who would accept it. (He almost lost his home when Random House demanded their $10,000 advance back.) He also plays a sample game, giving ample hints on how to win along the way.

Computer games are finally receiving serious attention: not as mindless arcade games, but as serious adult pursuits, and Balance of Power has lead the way. Chris's book is highly-recommended reading, and as the first book of its kind, should secure a place for his game as one of the most important in computer gaming history.

CGW: Which game have you done that you're proudest of?

Chris: **Balance of Power.**

CGW: Why?

Chris: It's had a very salutary impact upon the world; I have had a real effect on the world. Actually, I'm proud of three different games in three very different ways. I'm very proud of **Balance of Power** for what it has done for the world; I feel **Balance of Power** has made the world a better place.

CGW: Why?

Chris: It has taught people—I think it has made a small number of people much more realistic in their appraisal of world affairs. I think most Americans are pretty unrealistic in the way they assess world relations. I feel **Balance of Power** has done something to make a few of those people more aware of the complexities of the real world. I am very proud of **Eastern Front** for the way it kicked the industry in the pants on issues... the two things that **Eastern Front** were: first, make the damn interface clean. A lot of games before **Eastern Front** were either skill and action games that were very clean because all you did was run back and forth and shoot someone, or they were more complex games that were ghastly to talk to, just really arcane input structures. **Eastern Front** had a clean, beautiful input structure. That, I think, influenced the industry. The other thing that **Eastern Front** did was that it showed that people will respond to an intelligent game, and that was an important thing for the industry. The wisdom in the industry before **Eastern Front** came out was that people are dummies, all they want are silly shoot-em-ups, and all of a sudden, here comes **Eastern Front** and sells lots and lots of copies.

CGW: Is **Eastern Front** your most successful game in terms of profit?

Chris: Yes. In commercial terms, **Eastern Front** outstrips everything else I've done by at least a factor of four.

CGW: Yet you were on salary at Atari at the time, so...

Chris: I got royalties for **Eastern Front. Eastern Front** was done on my own time. I did it at home, nights and weekends, with my own equipment, using an Atari Assembler/Editor cartridge. I put in a lot of time at Atari, but I put in a lot of time on **Eastern Front**, so... it's funny, the amount of effort put into **Eastern Front** is trivial compared to what

we put into games nowadays. Again, I don't think most users appreciate the enormous escalation in the amount of effort required to produce a game. Let me just mention two games that came out in late 1981. The first was **Eastern Front**. I worked on **Eastern Front** for nine months, from January of 1981 to August of 1981. Working nights and weekends, my estimate is that I put in 20 to 30 hours a week. So, we're talking about a total investment of 100 hours a month, 800 hours of time to produce this game that sold 60,000 copies. That's about one hundred copies sold for every hour of work. That's ridiculous. I mean, huge results. Similarly, there was another games, **Caverns of Mars**, that came out just after **Eastern Front**, that game was done by a high school kid in 6 weeks time, there really wasn't much programming effort in it. A lot of games in '81 and '82 were that way, dashed off very quickly. Very little effort goes into them, they sold lots of copies, profit margins were fabulous in those days which is why the industry did so well. Nowadays, a typical game—just your average, everyday game—will take at least one programmer-year of effort and really, two programmer-years is much more common for a game that might sell 10,000 copies. Look at the economics and it's hard to imagine how the games industry can continue. There are serious problems coming up with ways to get money to programmers just to keep them in business. I know very, very few games programmers who are really making money in the business, you know, making a lot of money and getting rich—even the famous ones, the well-known ones are having problems. I count myself as fortunate. I know people who are struggling along with much less income than me. I am also very fortunate that I have a wife who works at a real job, and she brings home a very hefty salary. That allows us to get over the vagaries, the wild ups and downs of the games biz.

CGW: So your advice to new game designers is get married?

Chris: (laughs) Get married to a wife with a good job! There are a lot of husband-and-wife teams in the games business, and that's really rough, because the family income goes up and down wildly. At least mine has a stable base that we can count on.

CGW: I interrupted you while you were talking about the three games that you are proud of; you had already talked about **Balance of Power** and **Eastern Front**...

Chris: The third is **Excalibur**. I am very proud of that for the artistic attempt I made with it, and really, when you look at the size and scale of the game, it's an immensely ambitious design. When you consider the thing was released in 1983, and begun in 1982... I began work on this just as **Pac-Man** mania was peaking, and when I finished it, VCS games were still quite common. I am very proud of it for the ambitiousness of the attempt. It did not succeed anywhere near as well as I had hoped, but there's still a lot to be proud of.

CGW: You said in your book that you work on a game until you're sick of it, and then a month later you wish you could go back and just tweak one little thing. If you could go back to one of your games and tweak it, re-do it, whatever, which game would you choose?

Chris: If you want to talk about a game that is out there, shipped a particular way... one of my problems is that I'm willing to let sleeping dogs lie. **Legionnaire**, for example, is a pretty dead game. No one's going to play it anymore, so I wouldn't want to go back and fix some of the problems in that game. **Legionnaire** needed work. So one month after I release a game, there are a lot of things that I want to go back and fix, but two years after I release it, I don't care that much anymore.

CGW: So the answer is, you don't really want to go back and change anything?

Chris: Not now. I suspect I'll want to go back and tweak on **Patton Versus Rommel**; right now I'm just cleaning up bugs. Every now and then I go back and look at **Balance of Power** and I say, "You know, I really could have done this better." For example, if I—one of my problems is I'm in such a hurry to get to the future that I don't want to waste any time messing around in the past—if I had some time, I'd like to go back and mess with **Balance of Power**, especially, why did I do it in 128K? At the time, it seemed like the thing to do, but nobody has a skinny Mac anymore, and jeez, that game would have been so much better if I had designed it for 512K. So that bothers me.

CGW: Some of the people who read **CGW** are certainly people who have designed a game, who maybe have one in their mind, would like to design a game, maybe they're not sure if their idea is good enough, they're not sure if they can pull it off, or

they're very unsure of how the game design business works. What is your advice to them?

Chris: I would advise anybody interested in game design to do it as a hobby for at least one project, and preferably two. To do two projects strictly as hobby, and by hobby I mean do not even consider the possibility that your game will be sold commercially. Develop your first game for yourself to play and your friends. If you show it to a lot of people who aren't your friends and a lot of people say, "This is a good, fun game; can I have a copy?," then go commercial with your second game. Otherwise, do your second game as a hobby; that is, keep your regular job, work at your regular job during the day, keep your regular income, and work on your game nights and weekends. Now if you don't care enough about game design to work 40 hours a week at a regular job and nights and weekends on your game, then you'll fail anyway, because game design is a murderously difficult job, and you can't succeed if your attitude is, "Well, I could be writing programs to balance checkbooks for Bank of America." You won't survive unless you love it and you really desperately want to do it. If you're not willing to do it as a hobby, and you're not patient enough to do it as a hobby, you won't succeed. Once you have done a couple of games as an amateur, then do your first real commercial effort. At this point, about the best I can say is, there are many options available to you. Don't expect to make much money on your first professional effort. If you can make $5,000 out of your first professional effort, you're doing pretty well. Figure your second professional effort, you might make $10,000. Oh, and you better figure that it will take at least a year of your time to do each of these, because if you're going to compete with the pros out there who are spending a year of their time doing it, you're going to have to spend at least as much time as they do. So it's a pretty gloomy prediction, and the thing is, there are a lot of people who try to break into the games biz and get badly hurt by it, and it bothers me to see all of these people getting hurt so badly. But the industry is just not a fat, wealthy industry; it's tough.

CGW: It was fat and wealthy at one time, though.

Chris: It was extremely lucrative at one point; sinfully so. There are plenty of stories of programmers—I don't want to name any names—there are a lot of people out there who got very famous and very wealthy on the basis of some pretty shoddy work. At least work not deserving of the immense returns these guys made. Let's look at **Eastern Front**: 800 hours of total effort generated a return to me of, oh, let's say $80,000. That's $100 per hour. That's obscene. A super consultant...

CGW: You think that's obscene?

Chris: I think so, yeah.

CGW: I think that if people like what you do so much that they're willing to pay you en masse $100 per hour, that's excellent! I think that's great!

Chris: That's good fortune, but is it deserved? You see, the success was based on a lack of real competition, and this was a great deal of what happened in the games industry. There were a few people who got in ahead of anybody else and did something before anyone else did. If **Eastern Front** were still the best wargame in the business, then yes, I would deserve all of that money. But **Eastern Front's** primacy rested to a large extent on the fact that it was the first game out there that did all sorts of neat things with display list interrupts, and scrolling, and it was the first accessible wargame.

Maybe "obscene" is too strong a word. I think maybe a fairer statement is the immense returns I got on **Eastern Front** are a good measure of just how skewed, unrealistic, and uncompetitive the games market was in 1981 and 1982. And there were a lot of people who earned far more money than I did for other products with no greater merit.

CGW: I heard that the person at Atari who did the original VCS **Pac-Man** received a dollar per copy.

Chris: Ten cents. But it doesn't matter. They sold ten million games.

CGW: So he got a million dollars.

Chris: Yep. And for a port—not a design, but a port. And it was generally regarded to be a rather poor implementation. Later on they came out with Ms. Pac-Man, which was much better, but the damage was already done. They had ten million customers out there who were burned. So it is true that this person received an awful lot of money. That's probably the extreme case of financial returns far exceeding contribution, but there are plenty of others. I would almost go so far as to say that almost everybody who got rich during that period didn't deserve everything they got. What I'll do is I'll say that there were maybe one or two people

who deserved it, but I won't name names. That gives me an easy out if someone buttonholes me: "Damnit, Crawford, what are you saying in that interview in Computer Gaming World?"

CGW: "I wasn't talking about you!"

Chris: Exactly. "I said there were one or two notable exceptions, and you're one of them." So long as they hit me up one at a time, I'm fine.

CGW: If three of them get you at once, you're done for.

Chris: Yep. "Which two, Crawford?!" I'd pick the two largest. (laughs)

CGW: Are all computer games that are hits flukes?

Chris: No, I disagree with that assertion. We're talking shades of meaning here. Let's look at the two extremes: "You can write a formula that will determine the success of a computer game." Nope. Dead wrong. The other extreme is, "All computer game hits are flukes: completely unexpected and unpredictable, and no basis for expecting this game to do it." That is not so. That is, if you walk up to me with five brand-new computer games from five new authors no one has ever heard of, and show them to me, I can at least give you a ranking or some sort of indication which is most likely to succeed and which is least likely. I think it is possible for us to make reasonable assertions about success. I'll then point out the classic line—this is just a variation on the well-understood history of book publishing, of movies, of every endeavor like this—that some of the most successful games of all time were initially turned down. Some of the good stories about the things Electronic Arts turned down, Broderbund turned down... the whole industry turned down **Balance of Power**. Those stories are rampant. So it is certainly true that publishers have great difficulty finding winners. So in that respect, yes, there is a fluky aspect to success in the computer game industry.

CGW: Do you think **Patton Vs. Rommel** will be a hit?

Chris: No.

CGW: Why not?

Chris: It is not a great game. It is a good game, it is fun, but I don't feel it has greatness in its bowels. I feel **Patton Vs. Rommel** is too explicit an attempt to please the public rather than myself. **Balance of Power** I did for me, I did because I knew what I had to do to be proud of. And I did not really attempt to please people. I did make concessions to what appeared to be absolute needs, but otherwise, this was my game for me. And the result was a great game. **Patton Vs. Rommel** is a game for the public.

CGW: Do you think your next game will sell well?

Chris: My next game has a number of outcomes. The first question is, "Will I fail before I finish it?" That is, will I hew to the noble course I have plotted for myself, or will I lose my nerve and back out? Will I simply fail and not achieve what I set out to achieve? If it gets off the ground, it will certainly have a tremendous impact on the industry. Everyone in the industry will look at it and say, "This is a significant game." Will it succeed commercially? My gut says, "Yes," only because my gut says, "I want to play this game." When I feel that fire burning, I project that onto other people. That's all it is—a projection. I cannot know that rationally. ■

will compete with Synapse and Infocom products. Berlyn states that they have developed their own engine for adventures that will enable them to release their products in six or seven machine formats simultaneously. The first release is entitled Rager and is tentatively scheduled for a fall release date.

ALTERNATE REALITY CONTEST RESULTS ANNOUNCED!

The "Awesome AR Character" contest, sponsored by the Alternate Reality Users Group, closed on September 15th and the winners were announced by Datasoft in late November. Contestants tried to reach the highest possible level and/or submit a fictional story depicting the character's exploits. First Place went to Richard Carnduff for his fifteenth level adventurer named Cletis; Second Place was shared by Marlene Bird of Ames, Iowa for her fourteenth level character, Who Cares? and Donel Wyman of Oshkosh, Wisconsin for the level fourteen "Thorex." Deborah Bickford of Sacramento, California won the fictional autobiography award for her story about "Bethel."

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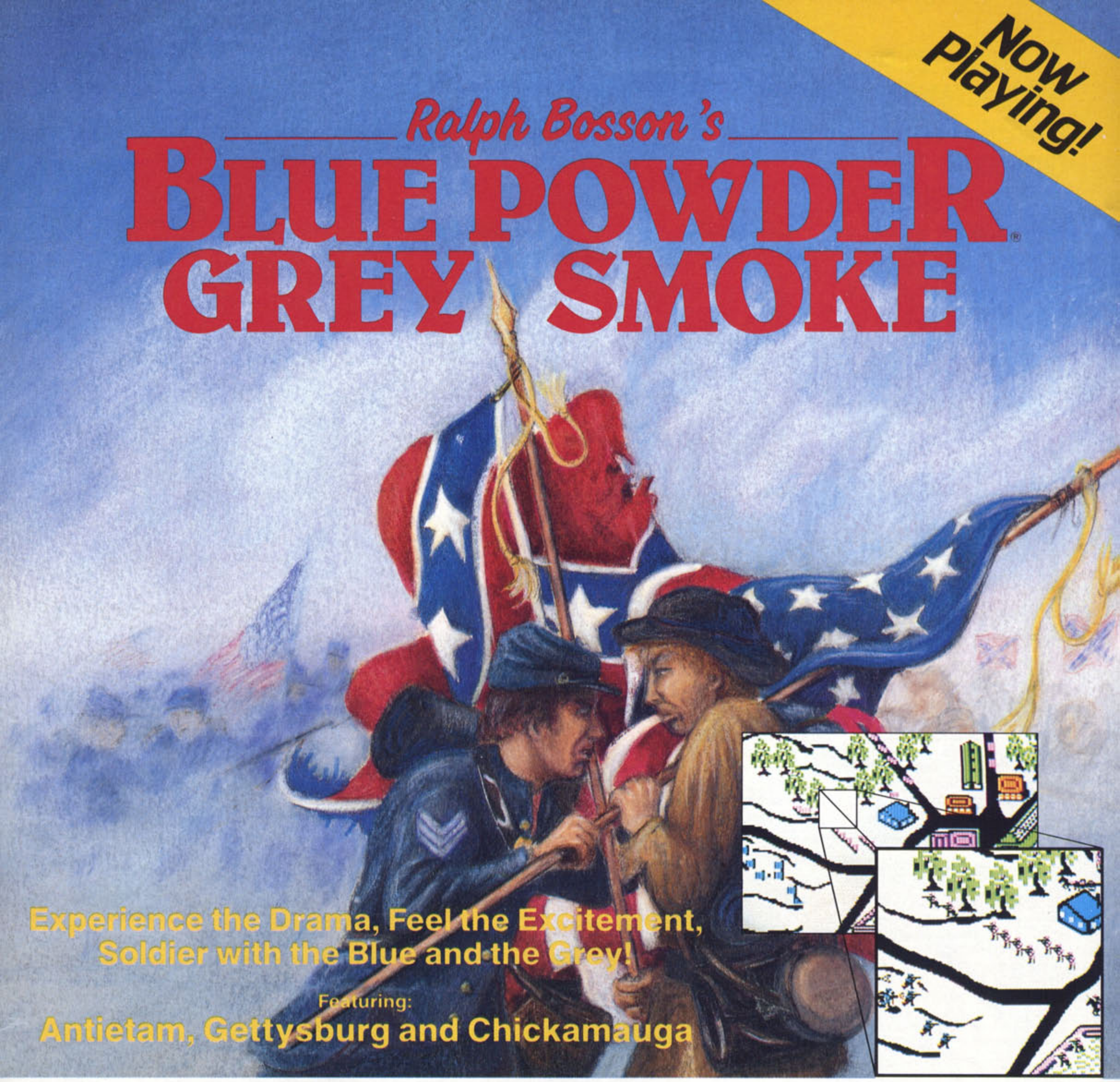
Mindscape, Inc. has formed a new division in order to respond to growing consumer demand for quality, low-priced software. The Thunder Mountain line will carry the suggested retail price of $9.95. This is possible because many of the programs will have already been published previously and have been out-of-print prior to this re-release or were published in European markets prior to this U.S. release. The software will support the Apple II, IBM, Macintosh, Commodore 64 and Atari 800 series. Rambo: First Blood Part II is scheduled to be the first release.

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SSI is retailing a line of SSI Classics at a suggested retail price of $14.95. These include such proven titles as: Combat Leader, Computer Baseball, Computer Bismarck, Cytron Masters, Eagles, Fortress, Galactic Gladiators, Gemstone Warrior, and Warp Factor. The programs are available through retailers, as well as direct from SSI.

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R.I.D. UPDATE

Due to the length of the 1985-1986 CGW index we have not included our game rating page in this issue. The game ratings will appear again starting with our March issue (#35). At that time the results of R.I.D. #32 will be included in the ratings database. There was no R.I.D. #33. Below are the games for R.I.D. #34.

When evaluating a game consider such things as PRESENTATION (graphics, sound, packaging, documentation); GAME DESIGN (design, playability, interesting?); and LIFE (does the game wear well?).

For each game you rate, place a 1 (terrible) through 9 (outstanding) next to the appropriate number. Leave blank any game which you have not played enough to have formed a personal opinion.

RID #34 (Use card at pg. 5)

1. Chessmaster 2000 (SftTooW)
2. Kampfgruppe (SSI)
3. Silent Service (MicPr)
4. Mech Brigade (SSI)
5. M.U.L.E. (EA)
6. Battle of Antietam (SSI)
7. Europe Ablaze (SSG)
8. Battlegroup (SSI)
9. War in Russia (SSI)
10. Star Fleet I (Cygnus)
11. Balance of Power (Mndscpe)
12. Patton vs. Rommel (EA)
13. Strategic Conquest (PBI)
14. Gettysburg: Turning Pt. (SSI)
15. Iwo Jima/Falklands (Firebd)
16. Lords of Conquest (EA)
17. Rommel: Tobruk (GDW)
18. Battlefront (SSG)
19. Alternate Reality (Datsft)
20. Leather God. Phobos (Infcm)
21. Ultima IV (Orign)
22. Bard's Tale (EA)
23. Wizardry I (SirTc)
24. Wizard's Crown (SSI)
25. Ultima III (Orign)
26. Elite (Firebd)
27. Enchanter (Infcm)
28. Hardball (Accld)
29. Phantasie (SSI)
30. Spellbreaker (Infcom)
31. Starflight (EA)
32. Moonmist (Infcm)
33. Mind Forever Voyag. (Infcm)
34. Amnesia (EA)
35. Hacker II (Actvsn)
36. Mean 18 (Accld)
37. Tenth Frame (Access)
38. Radio Baseball (EA)
39. Shard of Spring (SSI)
40. The Pawn (Firebd)
41. Bronze Dragon (Comwlth)
42. Ballyhoo (Infcm)
43. Shanghai (Actvsn)
44. Marble Madness (EA)
45. Alt. Reality: City (Datsft)
46. Super Sunday (AH)
47. Baseball Fanatic (PA)
48. Roadwar 2000 (SSI)
49. Robot Rascals (EA)
50. Defender of Crown (MasDes)
51. King of Chicago (MasDes)
52. Warship (SSI)
53. Wargame Const. Set (SSI)
54. S.D.I. (Mas Des)

A M N E S I A

Continued from pg. 41

The problem with the address book is that most of the numbers are really not necessary. In fact, there is only one number that you really have to call, and once you follow up on it, you are well along into the game. But it could take a lot of time and quarters to find that out. Try the entry under TTTT and see what comes of it.

Another important factor in the game is the 5.25" floppy disk that you must find and read. That, along with meeting Bette Binet, are the triggers to the end game. The floppy won't tell you all that much, and you will never be able to read the last file on the disk. That doesn't really matter; you just have to boot up the disk and rummage through the other files.

The end game itself is disappointing. You have very little do there, although you finally find out the whole story, getting most of it from Denise, and the rest later from Alice, who fills in the remaining gaps. A pretty seamy story, in fact, full of spite, greed, and treachery. And yes, love, too. Poor Alice. Personally, I still think the best ending is to marry her back in the chapel, and spend a happy life sheepherding in Australia.

The game reads like a novel, and that is where the problem lies: it's TOO MUCH like a novel. Often, you have the feeling that you're watching someone else doing things; there is little sense of actually participating, of actually being in the adventure. *Amnesia* is pervaded by an atmosphere of player non-control. Everything has been set-up beforehand; you need only do the right thing at the right time, or be in the right place at the right time, and the rest comes automatically.

And if you do find yourself struggling nevertheless, that's no problem: all the answers are in the back of the manual. Yep. You can turn to the back pages, and find out whatever you need to know. Sigh.

No doubt, a lot of glowing words will be written about the achievement of getting all of Manhattan on the disks. And that IS an amazing feat. The subway system is entirely accurate, insofar as the lines are concerned (most subway stations, however, do not have convenient stairs inside for uptown and downtown). You can, literally, go anywhere in the city by subway. At least anywhere in Manhattan; none of the trains will go any further than that. Still, that's plenty, and after you've accumulated some money in the game, you'll probably enjoy riding around Manhattan just for the heck of it (having, of course, saved your position first!), just to see what's there.

Speaking of saving, that's another sore point. You can save almost anywhere, any time. The save disk, however, holds only three positions, and the process of saving is rather slow. Possibly this is due to the amount of information that needs to be stored. However, the real pain is restoring. You can restore ONLY when you first boot up; there is no way to recall a saved position once play has begun.

The parser is adequate, but has some quirks of its own. Words recognized in one place may not be recognized in others. So you might be able to knock on a door at one location, but not at a different one. Objects understood by the parser in one area will not be understood in another. It's all very strange, and often frustrating.

Amnesia comes on two double-sided disks, and there is a lot of swapping and disk flipping involved, sometimes when you least expect it. As the game supports only one drive, this can become tedious after awhile, but it's something you have to live with.

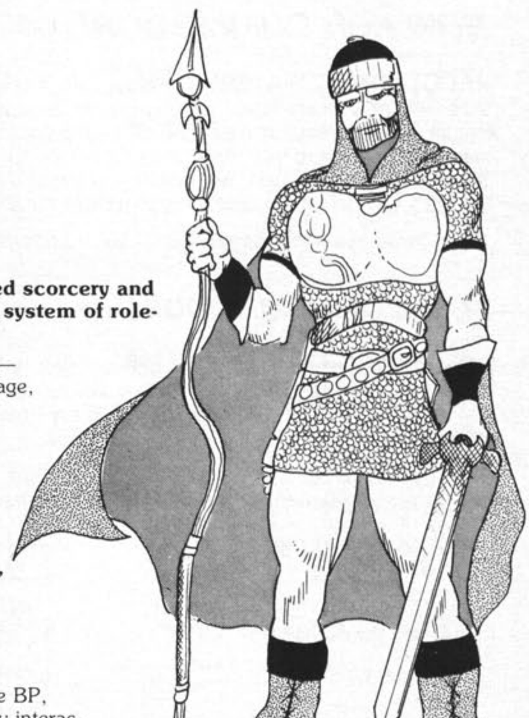
You also get a dual manual, street and subway map of Manhattan, and the X-Street Indexer. Half of the manual has the introductory material about booting and playing the game; the other half is a brochure for the Sunderland, with a guide to places of interest, etc. and the phone numbers found in the address book.

The subway map (street guide on the reverse) is accurate; if you ever plan on visiting New York, bring it with you (just don't expect the trains to come as fast as they do in the game!). However, leave the X-Street Indexer home; it is totally inaccurate. Being a native New Yorker, I noticed that right off. However, it is supposed to be that way, for game purposes. On occasion, strangers will come up and ask you for the cross street nearest a particular address. Using the Indexer, you give them the answer, which of course is quite wrong, but they will accept it. Obviously, there can be only one reason for this: it's an anti-piracy device. Considering that the Indexer holds 30 blocks and 15 avenues, for a total of 450 possible combinations, it's probably pretty effective.

Overall, *Amnesia* is an unsatisfying game. You can run around here, and run around there, and work up your triple scores as a detective, a character, and a survivor, but so what? Much of what you actually do in the game doesn't get you very far towards the ultimate solution. Boiled down to the essentials, there are only three things you need to do here: follow up on the clue from TTTT, get and read the disk, and meet Bette. There are auxiliary actions associated with them, but those are the key points. So when you think back on the game as a whole, you don't see yourself as having done, really, a whole lot; as having been the main character. It's more as though you came to certain places in a book, and turned a page to get on with the story.

Bottom line: Terrific prose, nice maps, too much novel, not enough adventure.





ROBOT RASCALS

Continued from pg. 34

game, but can easily backfire with the "Items Reverse" event in the Advanced level.

CONCLUSION

RR is a beautifully designed and packaged game. Once you understand what's going on, it plays smoothly and offers opportunity for lots of personal interaction. As a computer program, its flaws are relatively minor. I question the randomality of the turn sequences (at least on the Apple version where we know that the RND function isn't quite as reliable as other machines). For six out of seven turns in one game, the same player went last. On six out of seven occasions in another game, the same player went first. I also question the wisdom (on the Apple version, at least) of making the **Escape** key act as the reset button to start the game over. You can certainly lose a lot of multi-player games in progress with no double-checking that that's what the players want done. As a strategy game, I think that hardcore wargamers will dislike *RR* and those that are expecting a relatively sophisticated simulation will be disappointed in the game. Those who dislike randomness and find themselves impatient with traditional games like *Uno* that depend upon uncertainty and ordered chaos will also dislike *RR*. Those who want a game to play with the whole family or with the guests who've come over to play on the computer for the first time will enjoy *RR*. Those who enjoy backstabbing will play *RR* as ruthlessly as the play *Diplomacy* or *Junta* and those who simply want a pleasant gaming experience will avoid strategies like dropping another person's item in the lake. *RR* is a commendable effort at creating a computer game which is a social event instead of a puzzle or problem to be solved in solitaire fashion.

Circle Reader Service #43

Circle Reader Service #44

Defender of the Crown

Continued from pg. 37

human player hold back some of his/her gold early on so that he may purchase a catapult at an early stage of the game. The computer does not defend its castles very well during the opening turns. It is not too difficult to stage a successful siege early in the game. In besieging the castles, one gets to see some of the most magnificent graphics ever. The castle architecture is magnificent, even to delineating the differences between Saxon and Norman castles. The animation is smooth and aesthetically pleasing as the rocks arch toward the castle wall. Here is a game situation that is semi-arcade in nature. The player must use the mouse and cursor to set the tension on the catapult prior to firing. Most players catch on rather quickly, however, and here is where the design didn't quit meet the designer's original intent. They had intended that the catapult return to the upright position after each shot, thus making it more difficult to figure out the setting of the next shot. As it turns out, the player can simply reduce the tension on the catapult arm by one notch after knocking down a section of wall. Even those of us with gargantuan ineptitude in arcade efforts can master the settings in one play session. After the wall is battered down, the statistics are displayed for a standard battle to occur. If the attack is successful the castle, slightly worse for wear, but repaired, will be added to the player's holdings.

RAIDERS OF A LOST ART

As mentioned above, it may be that the player would rather plunder than conquer. In this case, the "Raid Castle" selection is toggled on the menu and another semi-arcade scenario is acted out upon the screen.

Interior: *The darkened courtyard of a castle. A Saxon invader and his courageous allies are furtively advancing toward a lighted doorway. They are discovered by the castle's defenders and a swordfight ensues. The daring Saxon weaves his menacing sword in a deadly matrix and drives the defenders back. The leader of the defenders falls*



and the invaders advance over the fallen guard.

CUT! PRINT!

The above scenario is only half of the "Raid Castle" sequence. After entering the lighted doorway, the characters enter an anteroom complete with stairs and the Captain of the Guards, a somewhat more formidable swordsman than the recently dispatched cannonfodder. The stairs give the player a chance to "Errol Flynn" it up by moving up and down the stairs for maximum swashbuckling effect. The documentation indicates, in fact, that this confuses the computer opponent and makes it possible for the hero to avoid being wounded as often. The documentation also hints that it is good to thrust your sword at the opponent immediately after a parried blow in order to reduce his chance of parrying the follow-up thrust.

It is here that the designers wish they could have crunched another feature into the program. In the swordfighting sequence, there is no feedback to determine how you are doing strengthwise or how strong your opponent remains. This would certainly make it easier to become efficient in the swordplay phase of the game, but alas, the window with swordplay feedback was deleted by other considerations. To be sure, it is possible to become proficient with game experience, but gamers like to have some idea of how they are doing as the scenario progresses.

DISTRESSED DAMSEL SALE

Those who enjoy the "Raid Castle" scenarios because of the swordplay will love the sequences where they can rescue a Saxon maiden in distress. The swordplay is the same as "Raid Castle" but the reward is far more interesting. If the player is successful in defeating the swordsman in the second sequence, a very romantic sequence unfolds. The

screen uses a narrative still shot to inform the player that the Saxon maiden has returned to the home castle. Months unfold and finally, before the fireplace, one of several different maidens with bedroom eyes and blushing cheeks approaches her Saxon hero for the obligatory, but tastefully depicted, love scene. She becomes the Saxon hero's wife and her name and caricature are depicted on screen at the beginning of each turn (along with all the other treasure). This scene in particular accomplishes a great deal in suggesting the cinematic flavor that the designers intended and is great fun to watch.

JOUST TO KEEP IN TOUCH!

Perhaps the most graphically stunning portion of the game is the tournament. Not only are the colors bright, but the animated spectators are artfully conceived and rendered. Banners blow in the wind and the lists themselves are a full spectrum of brilliant pigments which suggest a great carnival-like spectacle. The player is given the option of jousting for "Fame" or "Land." The object of the jousting scenario is to place the lance point squarely upon the shield of your opponent and unhorse him. This requires much practice before any degree of expertise is certain, so it is definitely advisable to joust for Fame rather than Land until the skill is mastered. Once the skill is mastered, however, a player can expand his Land holdings through the tournaments.

SAGE ADVICE FOR STRATEGIC ADVANTAGE

As noted above, it is wise to hold money in reserve to purchase a catapult early in the game. Since the computer does not defend its castles well at the beginning, you should take out a Norman early on. This greatly increases your chances of conquering enough territory to unite the kingdom and become king yourself. Further, experienced wargamers have a tendency to want to fortify at every opportunity. It isn't cost effective to fortify territories by building castles in regions without them. It is much more important to be aggressive and emphasize the offensive options. It is expressly important to think offensively since the structure of the game forces you to take some offensive option each turn. For example, if a player finds himself in a weak position, he cannot simply elect to build up his defense and pass. He must be at risk in some way (either raiding a castle and losing gold to pay his ransom if unsuccessful; hosting a tournament and losing the five gold in costs; or to risk a force in territorial combat). Pay close attention to the italicized portions of the documentation (*Sage Advice* sections) for specific details beyond these general tips.

"THE END" RESULT!

Defender of the Crown is a delightful experience and an auspicious beginning to what looks to be an excellent series of software offerings. The graphics and animation are the most exceptional to date.

If the game has any weakness it is in the fact that the game play itself (apart from the fabulous graphics and unique cinematic vehicle in which the game is couched) is not as complex as many strategy games. Judged strictly as a strategy/action game *Defender of the Crown* would be mundane. But it would be a mistake to judge this program only on its gaming system. If *Defender of the Crown* were the fourth, fifth, or sixth release in the Cinemaware series we would be unhappy with the game play. But as a first release we are more than pleased. The amount of energy that was put into this cutting edge product is evident. You will use it as a showcase program to demonstrate the power of the Amiga to your friends. We look forward to what the folks at Master Designer Software can, hopefully, do when they turn that energy to producing more detailed games using the wonderful cinematic vehicle they have created in *Defender of the Crown.*

The program is essentially interactive art and offers a new depth to the digital canvas. As the final horizon is adorned with the closing message, "The End," the player recognizes that whether he wins or loses, Cinemaware has accomplished what they set out to accomplish. This program institutes a new gaming genre (interactive cinema) with the player in the starring role. "The King is dead! Long live the King!".



INDEX 1985-1986

The following index includes listings for articles and games found in CGW 5.1 (Vol. 5 No. 1 dated January/February 1985) through #33 (December 1986). Issues from 1985 are referenced by their Vol./No. listing (5.1 through 5.5). Issues from 1986 are referenced by whole numbers (#25 through #33). Each index listing includes, in order, the following information: Name of game or article, issue number, page number, type of article.

The article types give you a hint as to how much material you can expect to find on the listing in question. FA (feature article) means the subject is treated in a major article that is often more than one page long. MR (micro review) refers to a small review usually 400-800 words long. TP refers to listings in Taking a Peek which are one or two paragraphs long and usually include a screen photo of the game. DP refers to mentions of the game found in a regular CGW column such as Commodore Key or Atari Playfield. SM refers to a short mention which is most often only one or two sentences long.

FA: Feature Review
MR: Micro Review
TP: Taking A Peek
DP: Dept./Column
SM: Short Mention


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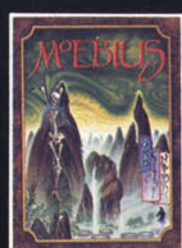
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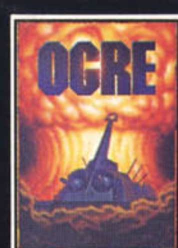
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